SOUTHERLY

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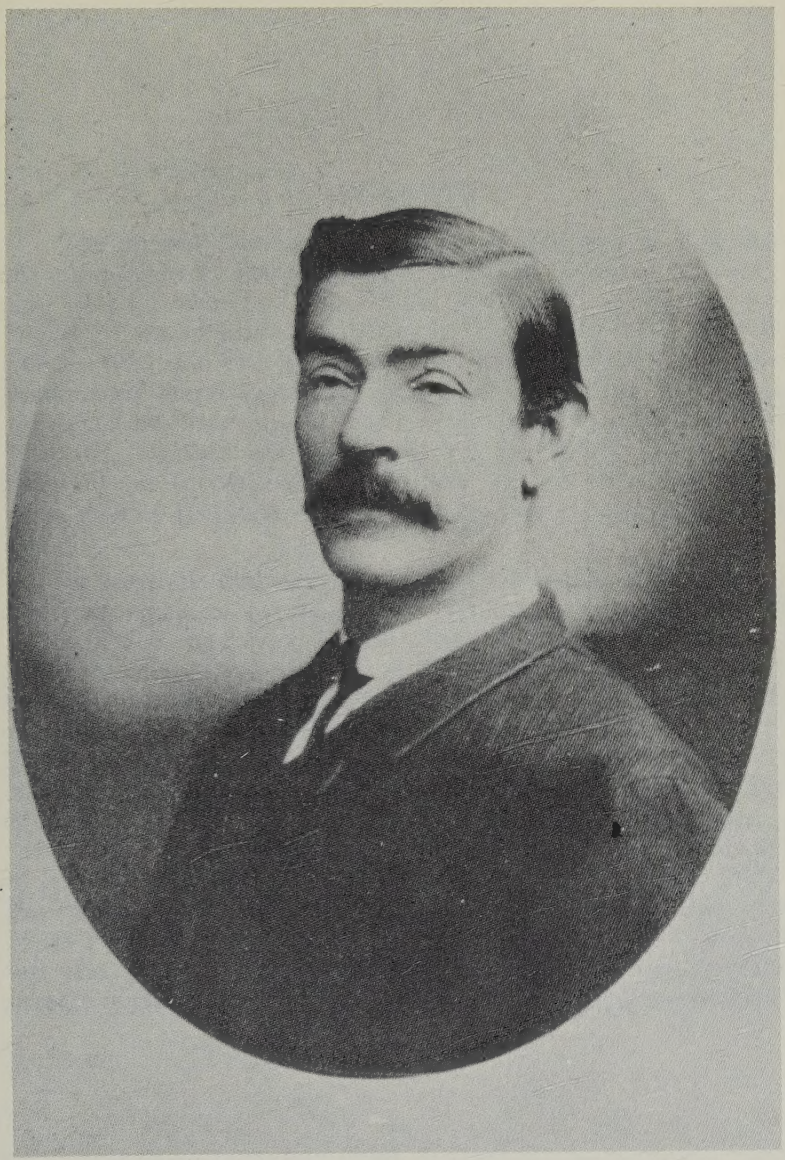
DEDICATION

This number is respectfully dedicated to Miss Kate Baker, O.B.E., who, as Bernard O'Dowd said, at the presentation to her of a portrait plaque in bronze, on December 14, 1936, "for many years, with simple devotion to an ideal, with unobtrusive patience and considerable self-sacrifice, and with an indomitable persistence that would have left many of us weary with our aims unaccomplished, has tended the altar of our young literature and has saved from the silverfish and mice some of the most precious of the archives of that literature . . . our well-loved little Maecenas, out of scanty means, has helped to place and keep Tom Collins on the literary map, and that out of the native goodness of her heart and her nun-like devotion to a high Australian literary ideal, and without any looked-for reward or desire for present or posthumous praise".



JOSEPH FURPHY (1889)
Before he became "Tom Collins".
(Block: Angus and Robertson Ltd.)

PREAMBLE

The present number of *Southerly* is designed to commemorate the anniversary of Joseph Furphy's birth, one hundred and two years ago, on September 26, 1843. The number has been made possible largely by the interest and willing co-operation of Miss Kate Baker, O.B.E., who was Furphy's friend and correspondent and became his posthumous literary guardian and apostle. She has freely supplied for inclusion here unpublished or ephemerally published work of Furphy's, together with notes on him by various hands, and has generally given enthusiastic assistance. We, as well as Furphy, owe her a debt of gratitude. Our thanks are due to Miss Miles Franklin also.

To mark his centenary, Furphy's major work, *Such Is Life,* was last year reprinted by Angus and Robertson. It will be reprinted in the U.S.A. next year by the Chicago University Press. *Rigby's Romance,* originally—to quote A. G. Stephens—"a juicy quarter of the mammoth", *Such Is Life,* is to be for the first time republished in full, also by Angus and Robertson, and an American edition will follow. The outstanding remaining necessity is a collection of Furphy's short stories, essays and letters, most of which have now been deposited by Miss Baker in the National Library, Canberra. (At least one essay, "Here be Truths", which Miss Baker says Furphy himself considered to be among his best work, has unfortunately been lost). Still, with the *Poems,* issued by Miss Baker in 1916, and the biography by Miss Miles Franklin, in association with Miss Baker, which was published last year, we now have a substantial body of Furphiana, to which the present number of *Southerly* adds matter of interest and permanence.

THREE STORIES BY FURPHY

A VIGNETTE OF PORT PHILLIP*

If the heaven of the hedonist be found (as some think) in idyllic conditions of life, the aborigines of the Upper Yarra bade fair to enter into that illusory paradise. For countless ages stationary as to population, disturbed by no aspirations, and governed by tradition alone, they held undisputed possession of a tribal heritage unsurpassed in all resources that conduce to physical welfare.

In accordance with such external conditions the moral temperament of the tribe was genial, generous and magnanimous. Physically they were a race of athletes incredibly expert in bushcraft; and the women were comely, as aboriginals go. Probably no people—taken in their primitive simplicity—have been so wantonly maligned; but this injustice has never been perpetrated by humane and competent observers. The libel should be frankly and wholly withdrawn in the interests of science, if not on the plea of fairness.

From the first contact of black and white races on the Yarra a mutual good-feeling prevailed. One underlying cause may be noticed. Only three years before the settlement of Port Phillip negro slavery had been abolished by legal enactment throughout the British dependencies. The movement had been of slow growth, definitely affecting popular thought in the direction of sympathy with dark-skinned races in general. Hence the moral atmosphere at that time was tinged by a theoretical recognition of common manhood, irrespective of colour. This was manifested in the attitude of the Port Phillip squatters and their employés toward the local blacks, as well as in strongly worded official charges from the Colonial Office. Owing to this wave of popular sentiment, the blacks were not only better treated than defenceless natives usually are, but were better understood. Happily, no rash act of hostility on either side precipitated a collision; and the cordial relations of the two races remained unbroken to the last.

And the last days were already in sight. No benevolence could have preserved the indigenous race. Born into a narrow horizon of life, their fatal contentment had paralysed initiative so effectually that all individual potencies of innovation—never lacking where man is found—died with each brain so endowed. Therefore, apart from social disposition, their idea of personal excellence implied nothing beyond a superior dexterity in the construction and use of their

* First printed in *The Age* Literary Supplement, 25/9/37 and 2/10/37. Copy supplied by Miss Kate Baker, O.B.E.

anomalous weapons; whilst the supernatural element—also inseparable from human nature—found exercise in a far-reaching cult of sorcery.

But underneath the petrified usages that fix a tribal type lies the fact that Nature, the mother, never repeats herself. Heredity, to say the least, is equivocal—is more full of surprises in its defaults than in its reproductions. Inborn variety is peremptory, and not always impressionable to despotic routine. There was one member of the Upper Yarra tribe whose ardent receptivity and clear intellect might have made a mark if conditions had permitted. His native name was Baradyuk, though, in accordance with a custom of the time, he called himself Ryrie,* after his most valued friend. He was about twenty years of age when the Upper Yarra was first settled. By an accident in early childhood he had lost his left arm, but the remaining hand acquired a degree of precision with spear or boomerang which placed him easily first amongst the tribesmen of his own age. By immemorial custom, each youth before being admitted to the privileges of manhood had to run down a selected kangaroo—a "flying doe"—and kill her with the barbed spear, which was always used as a lance, never as a javelin. Baradyuk had performed this exploit with ease, and had taken as his wife a young lubra named Kunuwarra (the swan).

But it was not the aboriginal accomplishments of Baradyuk that attracted the regard of his white friends. He acquired with marvellous rapidity a sufficient knowledge of their language to understand ordinary conversation, and to make his own meaning clear. He noted with intelligent interest the luxury of settled abodes, the domestication of animals, the use of metals, the miracle of letters, the many wonders of the new system. Withal, there was a frank consciousness of initial equality in his deportment toward these representatives of an incomparably higher civilisation. And, though stubbornly sceptical with respect to witchcraft, augury and other tribal superstitions, his inquiring mind pursued with eagerness the white man's doctrine of the Resurrection (a tenet more generally accepted then than now). All the Port Phillip blacks held a listless supposition that the white settlers were their own remote forefathers, now reappearing as a higher type; and to Baradyuk's inductive intellect the partially

* The Ryrie here mentioned was a friend of Samuel Furphy, the father of Joseph Furphy. They had come out together—among the celebrated "Argyle immigrants". Mr. William Ryrie took up large selections at Chateau Yering, now Yarra Glen, for grapevine culture. He asked Samuel Furphy to go into partnership with him, but the industry did not appeal to Samuel Furphy, as he was used to farming, so the Furphy family left Yarra Glen (Chateau Yering) when Joseph Furphy was six years old, and settled at Kyneton. Joseph Furphy speaks with authority on the Port Phillip blacks.—K.B.

analogous doctrine of the strangers seemed to confirm and supplement this hypothesis, thus extending the range of inquiry one step farther into the Unknown. All this research was impersonal, prompted only by the love of truth and the rapture of discovery. Too late had Nature produced the man; if the time had been conducive a racial epoch might have supervened.

For three or four years the tall, one-armed aboriginal was a familiar and welcome visitor at the new stations on the Upper Yarra. To the ignorant and superficial he appeared merely inquisitive; to others his mental responsiveness never lost its charm.

He became more and more regardless of tribal usages. Quick to copy, and even excel, all that appealed to the latent nobility of his nature, he treated his wife as an equal, to which concession she responded with a blind devotedness that enlisted every faculty of her being. She never left his presence, except when they parted each day to procure food in their separate vocations. Unlike the rest of their tribe, she listened eagerly to his comments and conclusions, respecting the peaceful invasion of the white settlers.

But intellectual discernment is not communicable. Though earnestly essaying to follow Baradyuk's musings, expressed in imperfect terms of aboriginal speculation, his wife's inadequate mind halted in a hazy half-light, which served mainly to ratify the traditions and myths already embedded in her consciousness. Yet she was aware of something beyond her field of vision, something in the personality of her husband which made her own life precious for his service and companionship.

At this time it happened that a Government survey party was verifying the neighboring landmarks and mapping the course of the Yarra. The chief of the party, being a corresponding member of an ethnological society in Paris, employed Baradyuk to collect aboriginal weapons and implements, particularly the celts of flint or diorite, which by this time had been thrown away in favor of the steel tomahawks supplied gratuitously by the Government.

In carrying out this commission Baradyuk visited a Gippsland tribe, where he was well known and hospitably received. But a few days after his return to the Yarra a little boy of the Gippsland tribe sickened and died. The child's father, Yilinbo, attributed the death to some act of sorcery effected by Baradyuk during his otherwise purposeless visit—for certainly no member of the Gippsland tribe could conceive a value in the now obsolete stone tomahawks. Baradyuk had timely warning of Yilinbo's ominous imputation; but, courageous and confident, he took no precautions beyond a casual watchfulness.

One winter day the tribesmen of the Yarra dispersed, as usual, to collect foods, mostly scrutinising and sounding hollow trees in quest of opossums or bears, whilst along the river the women gathered clean stems of soft thistles, or dug up dandelion roots (the true dent de lion, not the weed wrongly so called). Baradyuk, whose mutilation unfitted him for climbing, went alone across the flats, armed only with two spears. Soon he sighted half a dozen kangaroos coming out of the ranges to feed on the river flats. Swiftly and silently he gained a commanding position, with good cover. Then with the slender spear held midway, its indented rear end engaged by the claw of the wommera, he selected his mark and launched the weapon. A quick fortuitous motion brought the kangaroo out of line, but the next moment his second spear overtook the flying group, and transfixed one of the startled fugitives.

One moment later a sudden swerve of the escaping animals caught the alert eye of Baradyuk, and fixed his attention upon the small clump of tea-tree at which they shied. Then, while with one rapid glance he noted the tactical possibilities of the ground, a return boomerang shot upward from behind the tea-tree, and his hasty apprehension gave place to the cool gladiatorial instinct of a brave man confronted by definite peril. For he knew that the tea-tree clump covered a fully-armed foe—the man who sought his life; who had stalked him for advantage, and now held all the odds.

To attempt the recovery of his own spears was certain death; the alternative was to retire from cover to cover, gaining ground until his own unrivalled swiftness of foot might avail for direct flight. Already the boomerang was circling above and beyond the tree which shielded him, and that refuge was no longer tenable. He bounded up the steep side of the range, at a right angle to his intended line of retreat, in order to confuse the trajectory of the other's missiles by holding higher ground. Eluding one spear by a hand's breadth, he took cover before another could be discharged.

During his flight he had marked the spear strike ground, seventy or eighty paces beyond where it had crossed his course. His own wommera was still in his hand, and with that spear he could at least hold back his enemy until some chance might afford more equal terms of combat or opening for escape.

As a marksman or as a runner he knew himself far superior to Yilinbo. Meantime, he had gained little or nothing by difference of level, for his antagonist, now fully assured that he was unarmed, advanced openly upon him, not deigning to expend another return

boomerang in searching his cover. But the capture of that fallen spear might still turn the odds.

It was a short start and a hazardous dash. The intervening space was sufficiently open for the flight of a direct boomerang, and his antagonist's armament included that formidable weapon. But with all his energies concentrated on the task before him, he darted forth at a speed which gave his opponent little time for aim, and, bounding, ducking, side-leaping, he reached his objective unharmed, though a second spear passed him on the way. But whilst snatching the first spear in his flight he saw that it had struck a stone, and its point was shattered to rope-like splinters.

Without an instant's pause he continued his course to where the second spear, driven almost horizontally into the sward, still quivered with its initial force. This he tore from the ground, after a backward glance, then he bounded high in the air—prematurely by half a pulse beat. For as his feet returned to earth, the terrible war boomerang, gyrating with dead-level trajectory, struck midway between knee and ankle, half severing one limb and fracturing the other.

As the victor raced down upon him Baradyuk writhed to the base of a tree close by, and there supported himself upon his knees, grimly facing his antagonist, with the recovered spear held in his wommera. Yilinbo, apprehensive of intervention by Baradyuk's tribe, advanced without pause, covering himself with his shield. At twenty paces distance, Baradyuk made two rapid feints and discharged his spear. The weapon, striking Yilinbo's shield near its lower extremity, wrenched the slight shell upwards and inflicted a flesh wound on his thigh. Yilinbo dropped his shield, and withdrew the spear, then, swinging his waddy with both hands, he rushed upon his crippled opponent. Two ruthless blows stretched Baradyuk on the ground; then Yilinbo knelt beside him, and, taking a sharpened mussel shell out of the netted bag which hung backward from his neck, drew the keen edge heavily and repeatedly along the shrinking flank of his fallen enemy.

It was a striking anomaly that the genial and kindly blacks of Port Phillip, with their instinctive repugnance to anything in the shape of deliberate torture, should be devoted to a practice which, for insensate brutality, has been paralleled only amongst the most ferocious races of mankind. But by ingrained usage, founded on some actuating superstition, it was deemed the prerogative of any victor in mortal combat to take as a trophy the kidneys of the vanquished, and smear his own body with the fresh, reeking kidney fat. Doubtless, this was a survival from some state of savagery far lower than that

which prevailed in Port Phillip at the time of settlement. For the spontaneous kindliness of these children of Nature was conspicuous. But from some cause their moral sense seemed strangely in abeyance concerning the revolting rite referred to; indeed, it was a subject which they would discuss with perfect artlessness and indifference. And now, by the irony of circumstance, the only aboriginal who held the custom in abhorrence was probably its last victim. Moreover, the one tribesman whose balanced mind repudiated the besotment of witchcraft was probably the last sacrifice to that delusion. For all such beliefs and observances vanished in the racial paralysis which heralded a virtual extinction.

Baradyuk slowly awoke to consciousness. Mutilated, crippled, dying by inches, he accepted his fate with the stoicism of the savage, deploring nothing, hoping nothing, fearing nothing. His past life, with its dreams, its aspirations, its discoveries, seemed suddenly removed to an immeasurable distance, and the ghastly present was a phantasm which would not be gainsaid. Yet each moment in itself was endurable, and only the present moment was of any avail; all future moments mattered as little as the moments of the past.

An hour went by. The sky was overcast, and a keen, sleet-laden south wind swept the flat, scourging his lacerated flesh into intolerable pain. Here the fortitude of primitive manhood reached its limit, and a demoralising wave of self-pity left him keenly conscious of injustice, isolation and utter helplessness.

But a half-smothered wail of anguish answered the desolate thought, and in another moment Kunuwarra was raising his wounded head from the ground. Her quick eye read the story at a glance. She wasted no time in lamentation, but, tenderly wrapping her rug around his shivering form, she fled toward the camp. In a few minutes she returned with a fire stick and kindled a small fire where the sufferer would feel its warmth. Then two tribesmen, who had followed her from the camp, cut a quantity of leafy scrub and built a mia mia, having the fire at its entrance. This done, they withdrew, and Kunuwarra devoted herself solely to soothing by her aid and companionship the dismal journey of the doomed man.

For two days and nights her vigil lasted. With fidelity intensified by hoplessness she anticipated every wish, while the mere magnetism of her lingering touch alleviated the weary agony which would cease only with life.

At last came that long divorce, bringing to the devoted woman a sense of chill desolation softened by unspeakable thankfulness. But

her ministry was not yet finished. The tribesmen, silent and sorrowful, had daily waited on their dying comrade, and on their second visit had left a few long strips of freshly peeled wattle bark. The next office of the forlorn woman was to prepare her husband's body for burial, according to the custom of his tribe. This was done by folding the inanimate form with knees to chin, and binding the limbs and body closely together with the strips of bark. Then as night approached she surrounded the corpse at a few yards distance with a circle of small fires to guard against the evil influences that walked in darkness. Through that long winter night she heedfully attended the fires, till morning brought the men of her tribe. They came dejected, constrained and awe-stricken, as children when death claims a companion.

With their yam sticks they dug a grave of five feet deep, into which they lowered the body in a sitting position. Then the corpse was covered by two strong sheets of bark, placed diagonally, and the grave was filled in. The smouldering fires were next extinguished, the mia mia dismantled and all record or trace of the departed tribesman purposely obliterated.

No reprisal ensued. Two fully equipped Yarra warriors had followed Yilinbo to the first ridge of the Dandenongs, but here the tracks indicated that he was joined by four fellow tribesmen, who had accompanied him so far on the raid, and had there awaited his return. Whereupon the pursuers turned back, to plan retribution with their tribe. But the strange apathy of that transitional era precluded further action, till in the course of a few weeks the outrage was half condoned. Even under primitive conditions the idea of vendetta was alien to the light and elastic temperament of the Port Phillip aborigines.

Kunuwarra covered her head with pipeclay—the sign of bereavement—but seldom camped or travelled with her tribe. Her time was spent chiefly in wandering alone by the river or lingering round the homes of two or three white women, whose compassion had deepened into sympathy. And from this time forward she wore clothing supplied by these friends.

Winter had given place to summer, when the Upper Yarra was again visited by the surveyor who had been the innocent cause of Baradyuk's death. No one had discerned the capabilities of the intellectual and amiable aboriginal as clearly as he, but scientific considerations were paramount in his mind. On a moonlight night he opened the grave of Baradyuk, carefully noted the mode of burial, and secured the skull for his private collection. Then he refilled the grave, and endeavoured to efface all traces of his visit.

Meanwhile, at intervals of no more than two or three days, Kunuwarra was accustomed to pass her husband's resting place; though a childlike awe, born of veneration rather than fear, prevented her lingering by the spot. In one of these lonely rambles, half a year after the burial of Baradyuk, she noticed that the grave had been disturbed.

The tragedy of the past had clouded her mind with a sense of unreality in all things beyond the details of daily life. Hence she was insusceptible to surprise, even when thus confronted by the apparently supernatural. For nothing could be more foreign to aboriginal sentiment than the supposition that a grave had been deliberately tampered with.

She examined no further, finding a sufficient solution in some shapeless apprehension begotten of the vague eschatological superstition of her race; and from that time the indeterminate forecast congealed into a settled monomania. Yet she kept her own counsel. Gentle, patient, unobtrusive, she haunted the home station daily, weaving rush baskets for the women and supplying the men's huts with eels and blackfish, caught by soaking blackwood bark in isolated lagoons, where the fish were left by recurrent floods.

Winter had come again, when the squatter, on a business visit to Melbourne, engaged a ticket-of-leave-convict, named "Wingy" Sheldon, to serve as groom and dairyman. This ruffian had been a cavalry soldier in the East India Company's service, and had lost his left arm by the righteous stroke of a Mahratta tulwar, at the sack of a native temple. Shipped home to England as damaged war material, he had gone into partnership with a professional purveyor of anatomical "subjects", and had shortly afterward tendered to a society of medical students a body bearing evident marks of foul play. Further examination showed this to be the corpse of his confederate, suffocated during a drunken stupor. The students would have hushed the matter up, but a whisper reached the police. Sheldon was arrested, tried, convicted and condemned to death, the sentence being afterwards commuted to transportation for life.

The grey barbarian is not always lower than the Christian child. "Wingy" Sheldon was more callous and truculent, more servile and degraded than any aboriginal of the Upper Yarra tribe. Apart from a thorough competency in the work allotted to him, his sullen ill-nature and aggressive boorishness made him a most unpopular man amongst his fellows, and he was particularly disliked and avoided by the blacks who frequented the home station.

Yet Kunuwarra seemed to regard him with inexplicable interest, and now her dreamy monomania took shape as a settled hallucination. Without in any way forcing herself upon his notice, she was always near him, watchful, wistful, expectant; evidently perplexed yet pertinacious, as one whose soul is bound up in a last assurance. "Wingy's" fellow workmen used the situation as a theme for ribald jocularity, and he, bidding for the approbation of his employer, made a point of treating the woman with demonstrative harshness and contempt. On every opportunity he struck her with the hunting whip he habitually carried, but no ripple of fear or resentment disturbed the melancholy patience which absorbed her being. Silent and submissive, but supported by some clinging imagination too hazy to be called a hope, she waited, waited, while the unavailing days crept by.

Meanwhile, Sheldon was on his best behaviour. Doubtless, the felon, now released from a life-long pressure of adverse conditions, was spontaneously developing some better element hitherto latent in his embruted nature. When half his year's engagement had expired, his employer readily consented to his marriage with a woman in Melbourne, whom he had known in Van Diemen's Land, when both were assigned to the same master. So Sheldon accompanied the bullock driver on a trip to Melbourne for stores, and returned to the station with his newly-wedded wife.

In every respect this woman seemed a direct antithesis to the clumsy boor with whom she had cast her lot. Well-mannered, graceful, keen-eyed, classic-featured, ardent and resolute, she was evidently one who would go far in good or evil. She had been sent out for infanticide.

Kunuwarra seemed to foreknow and apprehend Sheldon's movements by intuition. From the time of his return to the station she haunted him no more, though maintaining friendly, and even affectionate relations with the white women and children on the place. She had built a mia mia on the face of a hill half a mile from the homestead, and there the spark of red fire was visible every night, wet or dry, and the lonely woman lived on, waiting for she knew not what.

It was apparent from the first that Sheldon's wife regarded him with the contempt which soon ripens into intolerant loathing; and the husband naturally resented this in his own ungainly and blustering way. But one morning, about a month after their marriage, he beat her with his whip—probably impelled to the action by an uncouth sense of authority, rather than by exasperation. During the day he went to the men's hut for his meals, while his wife remained indoors. In

the evening he went home, and a minute later he was seen to emerge from the door, walking slowly and unsteadily, with his arm upraised. Three or four men, standing at the door of their hut, watched him approach, pausing frequently, as if to recover strength, then renewing his way with obvious effort. As he came nearer they saw the semi-cylindrical handle of a shear blade projecting from his right side—the handle only, for the eight-inch blade had been driven home.

"Don't touch it yet!" he gasped. "I'm gone when it's pulled out! Mind, I done it meself! Where's the master?"

A seat was brought out, on which they supported his swaying form. The squatter himself now joined the group.

"Who has done this?" he demanded.

The dying man roused himself, and faltered. "I done it meself! Mind I done it meself! Now pull it out, for God's sake!"

The squatter signed to one of the men, who gently withdrew the weapon.

"Mind, I done——". A rush of bright red arterial blood foamed from the white writhing lips, and so, with a magnanimous lie half uttered, the convict followed across the boundary more than one victim of his own stolid brutality.

They carried him back to his hut. In the full light of the doorway stood his wife, scornful, defiant, like some fearless wild animal at bay.

"Stand aside, Mrs. Sheldon", said the squatter coldly. "He has cleared you with his dying statement, but you must be ready to leave the station at sunrise to-morrow."

The woman bowed with a sardonic smile.

Early next morning a dray started for Melbourne carrying Mrs. Sheldon and her belongings. At midday another conveyed a roughly made coffin to an adjacent hill, where "Wingy" Sheldon was buried without ceremony.

But not without a mourner. On the following morning a stock-keeper, riding past the grave, was first to contemplate the final scene of a drama of clashing cross-purposes, played impromptu by future-blind puppets, each guided by a dominant impulse. The loose mound had been dug away with a yam stick, a little below the original surface, and in that hollow lay the dead body of Kunuwarra. Probably no autopsy, however scientifically skilful, could have determined the physical cause of her death. She had seen enough, suffered enough,

brooded enough; and now, exercising that strange faculty peculiar to savage races, she had died by mere volition of will.

They buried her close by, in a grave unmarked and unremembered. To most observers of her later life she had appeared as a crazy, harmless oddity. Yet there were some who read a note of tenderest pathos into the lowly tragedy. For dissimilar customs of life and modes of thought can never cancel certain touches of nature that make the whole world kin.

FOUR HALF-CROWNS

"Why, I thought you were on day-shift this week, Jack!" said Dick Lithgow, with infantile solicitude, as he grasped the hand of his former mate and benefactor.

"So I am; but Sam Leech owes me half a shift, and he's taking it out now. I'm going on at 2. Come home with me to dinner."

"Silence in the coort!"

"Can't leave till the court closes", whispered Dick. "By the way, old man, can you lend me half-a-sov. to pay a deposit? I'll return it to you to-morrow without fail."

"I've no money on me, but I'll get it for you in a second", replied Jack Trent. He tiptoed across the court and obtained the money from Jim Partridge, promising to repay it next morning when the lender would be passing the crusher on his way home from work.

"Mind, I'll return this to-morrow morning", whispered Dick as he took the half-sovereign.

"Don't be foolish! What's ten bob between *us*?"

. . . . .

At 8 next morning, Jack started his 12-hour shift at the battery-engine a quarter of a mile from home. Shortly afterwards the approach of Jim Partridge reminded him that he had forgotten his liability. Meanwhile, the relieved engine-driver had been home for breakfast, and had returned to the crusher on some business of his own.

"Here, Sam", said Jack, in self-disgust, "will you take the engine for a quarter of an hour? I've forgotten something."

"Not that ten bob!" remonstrated Partridge. "You ain't goin' home for that? What rot!"

"I want to teach myself a lesson", replied Jack stubbornly, and he was gone.

When within sight of his home he noticed his six-year-old daughter come out of the front door in her sun-bonnet and run down the straggling street. The the door was slowly closed from within.

As usual, he went round by the back-door. This also was shut; and with the unobtrusive action of an over-matched man, he opened it and entered the kitchen. The door of communication with the front room was shut. This also he deprecatingly opened and passed through. The door of the front bedroom was shut, and a glance showed that the street-door was locked from the inside. He was on the point of calling his wife, when he noticed a pile of four half-crowns on the table. So Dick had been punctual. Thus his wife would be cheated of a pretext for her customary sneer at his continued intimacy with his former mate. Content, therefore, he put the coins in his pocket, and withdrew as quietly as he had entered, closing both doors behind him.

. . . . .

Whilst returning to the crusher, Trent saw his little girl come out of a confectioner's shop, with a parcel in her hand. As his eye dwelt fondly on the child, he observed that, instead of returning home, she skipped into the back-yard of a house where certain of her companions lived.

When he reached the crusher, Sam Leech, Partridge, and two incidental callers happened to be discussing Dick Lithgow.

"Double-cunnin' card", remarked Partridge. "It's his religion to do everything in an underhand way, an' seem simple while he's throwin' dust in people's eyes. Got everybody's title to their bit o' ground at his finger-ends. Spent all day yesterday in the Warden's Court, like a cat watchin' a hundred mouse-holes."

"Makes it pay better nor work, appearingly", contributed an old-timer, enviously. "Jist before the court opened I was in the bank, sellin' a bit o' gold; an' in he comes, an' breaks a £10 cheque. 'Flusher now nor when you an' Jack Trent went mates, Dick', says I. Them was the very words I used, Jack."

And so the commonplace gossip went on for a quarter of an hour; then Jack was left alone with his routine work, and his first shadow of conjugal mistrust.

. . . . .

It was eighteen months since he had picked up Dick—a social outlaw, who had seen better times. Generosity being his "line of least resistance", he had shared his cheap home and his fluctuating prospects with the dead-beat. During six months they had worked out a piece

of shallow ground, with fair results; then Jack had fallen into his present situation, while Dick forswore manual labour, and lived cleanly, as a gentleman should.

To-day, for the first time, Jack's under-current of thought persistently associated Dick with the alienation which had grown up between himself and his wife. He recalled the gradual ripening, on her side, of coolness to disdain, during his partnership with Dick, and her present unreasoning intolerance of his own mere presence. To be sure, Dick's attitude toward her had always been somewhat distant; and she had uniformly regarded with jealous resentment the continued intimacy of the two men. Dick, he reluctantly conceded, was a born strategist; but, on the other hand, one of his wife's few engaging qualities was a fearless and haughty sincerity. Here a strong impulse of self-respect and compunction swept the gathering suspicion from his mind; and, in that moral reaction, he shrank from the speculation as from sacrilege.

But the suggestion would not be gainsaid, for the crashing diapason of the 12-head battery had fallen into a rhythmic repetition of the words, "four half-crowns, four half-crowns". Why should this recent connection of trivial incidents amount fortuitously to such a significant sum—unbalanced by one single item minus? In mere justice to his wife, this must be followed to a decisive issue. And in working out the equation, he would hold her virtue as represented by the indeterminate X. As touching himself, the past was irrevocable; independently of former obliviousness or present mistrust, he was a dishonoured man, or he was not; there could be no mean.

. . . . .

Relieved at 8 in the evening, he walked across to Partridge's hut. "Jim, have you still got the four half-crowns I repaid you this morning?"

Partridge carefully selected the coins from a capacious but famine-stricken purse.

"Now, Jim, I want you to lend me these identical half-crowns for a few days, or a few weeks, as the case may be. Don't ask me why. I have a kind of wager on hand. Of course, I could repay you to-morrow, only that, you know, my wife runs the bank——"

"Jis' so, jis' so", interrupted Partridge sympathetically. "No hurry for twelve months, old man."

A few minutes later, Jack Trent met his little daughter's eager greeting and her mother's unconcealed annoyance at his presence. Now, either that self-possessed woman was maintaining such exact

poise under an Atlas-burden, or his imaginations were as foul as Vulcan's smithy. Well, she should be witness, counsel, judge and jury in her own case. So, on sitting down to supper, he took the four half-crowns from his pocket, and piled them beside his plate. But there was no more evidence of self-consciousness or embarrassment in the woman than in the child.

. . . . .

The meal concluded, he returned the coins to his pocket. During the evening, he casually remarked that he had some work to do at the crusher, and would require to start at 12. It was part of the engine-driver's duty to pack glands, adjust bearings, etc. during the 24 hours of Sunday; and this was Saturday night.

At each meal, on Sunday, the four half-crowns were silently produced, and piled beside his plate. Still no trace of agitation, or even of interest, in the woman's demeanour.

During the week, Jack took the night-shift, showing no departure from the tenor of his former life, except that the bedroom-door was locked upon his half-day's sleep, and that the four half-crowns lay by his plate during meals. Also, acceding to his mother's repeated wish, he took his little daughter to her, for a month's visit, 15 miles by coach. His wife had readily agreed to this. She agreed to everything now.

. . . . .

With the ready concurrence of Sam Leech, Jack retained the night-shift during the next week. Apart from the locked bedroom-door and the formality of the four half-crowns, there was no change in his manner, no significance in his conversation. But the woman's cheeks were growing hollow, and dark streaks were gathering beneath her dry, bloodshot eyes. Yet she was cheerful to vivacity, tasteful in dress, and her magnificent hair shone like changeable silk. Her manner, formerly hard and sullen, had become piteously submissive.

But no armistice, no quarter, no explanation, could now ensue. For her husband, as for herself, the alternative was past; choice had given place to necessity; freewill to destiny. Each was now being forced along a separate path, hedged, right and left, by impossibilities.

Each morning, he noticed the fresh tracks of her boots to and from a secluded corner of the engine-house, where a quantity of waste roofing-iron leaned against the wall, and an aperture afforded a full view of the lamp-lit interior. And often now, as he lay in bed at home, inviting untimely sleep, he heard her voice in broken monologue, interrupted, with increasing frequency, by a mirthless laugh. So passed the second week, and the third.

On the fourth week he again took the night shift, but the end had come. The drama had been advancing, and the curtain was now to rise on the first scene of the last Act. As he went home on Monday morning, he noticed that there were no fresh tracks on the pathway. The front door of the house was locked, the back door also, and all was still. Without noise or violence, he prised open the back door with a pick. No one in the kitchen; no fire on the hearth. He passed into the front room. A nude woman, half-veiled by her cataract of sunbright hair, was posing in the best light.

"Who are you?" he asked, in his kindest tone.

"I'm Lady Godiva, in the book—clothed with chastity", she replied, smiling.

"Do you know me, Alice?"

"Of course I do! You're a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; and I waited for you till my hair was grey; then I put the four half-crowns in a quart of water, and boiled it down to a pint, and took it morning and evening till I died, and you laid the four half-crowns on my eyes. I could feel you trampling the earth down on me, you cruel, cruel man; but it was my place to be patient; and I waited a thousand years, till they melted the four half-crowns, and poured them down my throat, to keep me awake. I'm glad little Fanny's dead, Jack—aren't you? She might have grown up to be a woman taken in adultery. They're all alike, when you know them, except the Virgin Mary and me. Hush! don't you hear the angels calling? Listen! We are coming, sister Mary! we are coming by-and-bye. Isn't it beautiful? But O dear, dear! I've been wandering round the world; and I'm tired, tired, tired; and my tears are all dried up; and Jesus is far away, treading the winepress alone! There wasn't a star in the sky, and the rain was on my forehead, O so soft and sweet, like the kiss of death; but I couldn't die till I had put in years and years of prayer and martyrdom. There was something I wanted to tell you—what was it? O! Robinson Crusoe! I say!—we'll go away by ourselves, and have a long, long sleep, with no one to whisper about us, and no half-crowns to keep us awake, in the island of Forget-me-not. Or a cottage by the sea!—that's the only fit place in the world, where a virtuous woman won't be shocked by——"

"Come and put your clothes on, Alice", interrupted her husband, leading the way into the bed-room.

"Isn't it better to be clothed in chastity?" she asked, with momentary distress in her uncertain glance. "But I'll love, honour, and obey you, Jack, as I always did. Clothes came with sin,

and sin came with four half-crowns and thirty pieces of silver; and I think it's more becoming in a virtuous woman to be like Eve in her innocence"—and so she babbled on whilst assuming her clothes and arranging her hair.

"Now sit down quietly, Alice; I'll be back in a minute."

He passed into the street, and knocked at the door of the adjoining cottage.

"Is George at home, Mrs Briscoe?"

"No; he's at work. What's wrong? Is Mrs. Trent"—she hesitated. "Can I do anything?"

"If you please. Could you send for a policeman? My wife seems to have gone wrong in her mind. I must get back at once."

The woman hurried away, bareheaded.

"Bad enough", he muttered, retracing his steps; "but the very best that she has left open to either of us. Now I must drop a line to Dick, giving him, say, seven days' start for his life. But I wish I was dead and done with it all."

As he re-entered the house, his wife, again completely unclothed, emerged from the bed-room, greeting him with the meaningless smile on her lips, and the dancing glitter in her eyes.

THE DISCOVERY OF CHRISTMAS REEF*

At sunrise, on December 23, '66, Sam Boyd started from his hut on the obscure Alum Bagh goldfield. He carried a single-ended pick, a short-handled shovel, and a tin dish—a prospecting plant toy-like in size, but potent in practice. A week's provisions, packed partly in a billy and partly in a canvas satchel, completed his outfit. Sam was on holiday. Ordinarily, he was a wages man, working a 12-hour shift on the Pactolus crusher, where he attended to the water-power machinery, and bossed the boy who fed the 8-head battery.

As Christmas would fall on a Tuesday, the owner of the Pactolus had declared a fortnight's holiday, covering Christmas and New Year's day. Sam's mate—a married man—was retained as watchman

* On page 172 of *Joseph Furphy: The Legend of a Man and His Book*, Miss Miles Franklin states that this story was published in a Western Australian paper. As it has not been possible to verify her statement, acknowledgment is here made where due.

for the interval; and Sam had seized the opportunity to carry out a pet project.

About a year previously, a red-bearded stranger had come in from where the rugged and riven watershed of Victoria extends westward from Mt. Blackwood. He came in with his life, and little else, having left his prospecting tools and all encumbrances, together with most of his sanity, in the tremendous solitudes of that trackless region. He sold about 3 oz. of gold at the store, and rested a few days; then re-equipped himself, and stealthily returned into the almost impassable gullies from whence he had come. He returned in a fortnight, more haggard and crazy than before, and without any gold to sell. He got a job as substitute for a sick sluicer, and for three weeks he worked like one possessed. This sufficed for another start; and again he betook himself to the tortured geology of the intricate Divide. Nothing more had been heard of him. Saturnine and secretive, he had made no friends on the Bagh; yet it was kindly hoped that he had found his way through to some other settlement.

Of course, the country had already been prospected as thoroughly as could be done by beings destitute of claws or wings, and as fruitlessly as if it had been a coral island; but Sam had read great things into the furtive movements of the red-bearded stranger, and was now putting his roseate forecasts to the proof.

He kept the creek on his right, following its course upward. The channel itself was impracticable; here a barricade of slippery logs; there a growth of scrub, laced with parasites, and almost impervious to daylight; usually scrub and fallen timber in effective blockade, flanked by walls which no human foot might climb without artificial aid. And progress was scarcely less difficult on higher ground, where the alternative was some headlong descent of such giddy depth that the interspace of twenty or thirty yards to the opposing brow seemed irregularly floored by the quivering foliage of the tall white gums rooted in the twilight abyss below.

The country was planless, chaotic, yet consistent in its lack of leading ridges, sloping hill-sides, table-lands, and flats. Nor was there any sky-line, near or distant. From the horizon to zenith the view was bounded by masses of foliage, with only irregular and scanty openings revealing the sky. Vegetation rioted on the rich red soil. The surface was hidden by sprawling, interlaced brambles, breast-high brackens, and tall, harsh tussock grass, except where these were choked out by dog-wood, mountain ash, musk, fern-tree, or some unnamed scrub; whilst the mighty eucalyptus, colonnading the circum-

scribed survey, towered over all. Though precipitous beyond description, one peculiarity of the region was the comparative rareness of rock, old or recent. Here and there a sharply tilted comb of slate, a rugged outcrop of sandstone, or an intrusion of columnar basalt, showed through the thick mantle of diversified growth; but, apart from the extreme steepness of the country, its leading features were the infrequency of surface rock, and the profusion of vegetation.

The wild, primeval grandeur of the scene touched a sympathetic note in the nature of the young prospector. There was delight in surmounting the checks and hindrances of every step, but underneath the bliss of freedom and the rapture of exploration there still glowed the shapeless prophecy of gold. And whether scaling precipitous fronts or forcing a way through giant bracken,whether climbing over or crawling under prostrate trees, denuded of sapwood by half a century of decay, his alert eye noted every geological feature of exposed ground. And so, with a short interval at midday, he pursued his course till evening.

By a glowing camp-fire, down in the bed of the creek, with hunger appeased, knee-boots removed, pipe lit, and feet toward the coals, Sam addressed himself to his evening devotions. He took from the inside pocket of his dungaree jacket a flat package, carefully wrapped in waterproof paper. The removal of this covering, and several others, disclosed his fetish, or whatever name you may apply to the photo. of a woman whose nearest kinship to himself dated probably beyond Heptarchy. Further, the mysterious affinity of contraries came here into play, inasmuch as their daily occupations, judged from the loftiest standpoint, were as wide asunder as the poles; she, a hospital nurse, soaring toward the heaven of hallowed utility, whilst he, a gold-producer, burrowed Gehennaward in search of Mammon's metal. For truly the digger, though resourceful, brave and debonair to a proverb, is the most bootless workman on earth—always in one sense of the word, often in both.

The pictured face seemed marked with a price beyond rubies (as Solomon puts it); differing from the chiselled classic ideal only in breadth of forehead; showing, indeed, such severe regularity of feature that its sweetness became modified by a note of divine austerity. Nevertheless, the lineaments of the face indexed that type of moral beauty to which all things, except the sordid and impure, are beautiful. And a long silky braid of amber-tinted hair, accompanying the portrait, indicated that Molly Summers leaned to the blonde rather than the brunette.

After a satisfying contemplation of the picture, Sam indulged in a twentieth perusal of Molly's last letter, written to intimate that

she had just obtained leave of absence in order to duplicate her father's chance in a land lottery. Evening service being thus concluded the young Sabbath-breaker lapsed into the profound sleep of perfect health and utter weariness.

During the whole of Monday, Sam was confronted by still wilder and more difficult country; a country suffocated by redundancy of growth; and cleft by gorges which, in spite of punctually observed evening orisons, haunted his sleep through the ensuing night. No sign of reef or alluvial gold yet, but many indications of unsuccessful prospecting, old and recent. By this time, he was four or five miles from his starting point.

On the third morning—Christmas Day—he crossed the creek and resumed his way, less interested in the unique features of the scene, and more intent on the primary object of his expedition. Step by step, clinging to the faithfully rooted bracken, and proving every foothold, he had climbed about 150 feet from his camp to find himself on a shapeless and rifted ridge, where the longer vista of tree-columns denoted an area of elevated ground larger than usual. Here, the surface, scored in every direction by shallow ravines, was in some places littered with granules of sienna-tinted quartz. The character of the stone betokened gold; and Sam became conscious of a premonition that the limit of his excursion was reached, that his goal was within touch. He sought and scanned exposed surfaces with increased vigilance. He made his way to the butt of every fallen tree; he gave special heed to the channel of every ravine in his way; his eyes never left the ground as he laboriously clove his way through the undergrowth. All the rapture of expectant discovery was on him. Walking where no white man's foot had ever trodden; taking note of phenomena disclosed by slow-moving periods, to which the history of earth's most ancient nations is but a story of yesterday—to be first, *first*; this was kinship. Many would follow, none had preceded . . .

Then he paused to look down upon a set of tools, leaning against a fractured and half-buried log. The pick and shovel were similar to his own, but with rust-encrusted iron, and with handles blackened by the drip from foliage above. The dish, though unworn, was flaked and spotted with rust. He thought of the red-bearded prospector who had twice left the Bagh in this direction. On his first trip the stranger had furnished himself at the store; on the next he had obtained second-hand tools from the local blacksmith. Now these relics bore no sign of wear; the black paint was yet on the pick-head; the maker's label still clung to the sodden handle of the shovel. The tools

had been lost. But in all probability this range had been the stranger's objective.

Just visible through an aperture in the scrub, at an uncertain distance of 20 or 40 yards, the butt of an enormous fallen tree thrust its denuded roots above the foliage; and it seemed to Sam that the black, earth-embedded log before him was a limb of the same prostrate giant. He placed his own tools, with his satchel and billy, beside the rusting relics, and thus lightened, stepped on the log and set out along the trunk toward what seemed a favourite look-out position. Scarcely had he started when he thought of kindling a fire beside his deposit; but his ardour grudged the delay, his over-confidence slighted the risk, and he hurried onward.

A hundred feet of arduous progress brought him to a charred butt, buried in dogwood and mountain ash. He was on the wrong log. But in transit he had crossed the shattered head of another gigantic tree, which had seemed to lie in a truer direction. He followed this trunk through its embracing scrub, only to find the roots short and inconspicuous. However, from that point of moderate vantage he saw—or fancied he saw—the vast, weather-bleached roots. Diving again into the jungle, he made a bee-line for that point, but failed to find it. Worse still, he had by this time lost the bearings of his starting-place.

Sam was native-born, country-bred, and a first-class bushman, even as Australians go. But the day was cloudy; and, in the blundering hurry of the moment, he had counted too much on his own sense of locality. Despite his impatience, however, he searched for his tools and provisions systematically. His best hope was to recover his own track from the ascent of the ridge to his discovery of the relics; but here again he was unsuccessful. Possibly he unknowingly passed more than once within a few yards of his deposit; but the long forenoon fretted uselessly away, leaving him baffled and disconcerted.

Then it appeared to him that the distant certainty of his hut was preferable to the adjacent Buckley-show of his luggage. But the visible portion of the sky was of a uniform slate colour; and Sam, fully realising the temporary subversion of his own instinct of locality, was wise enough to defer his start until his course could be verified by sun or stars. No bushman, by the way, has any patience with the tenderfoot who talks of defining the poles by observation of moss on trees, etc. In fact, a mariner's compass is the only substitute for sun and stars; and Sam had been too careless and confident to equip himself with that useful instrument. Meanwhile, he tried to appease his hunger with bramble berries; but these were small, scanty, and unripe.

And now, ranging round, intent only on finding berries and locating the sun, he made another discovery.

On a quartz-strewn ridge, where the scrub gave place to brackens and heath, he found evidence of a week's work, done by skilful hands. A well-defined reef had been laid bare for some yards, and abandoned; then twelve months of storm and sunshine had passed over the place, and Nature was rapidly healing the scar imprinted by her first invader. A thick crop of young brackens had already thrust their voluted fronds through the mullock thrown from the open cut. Further investigation disclosed traces of a pathway leading into a contiguous ravine.

This track, terminating in a dozen steps cut into the steep slope, thirty yards away, gave access to a spring, where a simply constructed dam imprisoned about 100 gallons of water. Close by, a flat block of sandstone had been used as a bed for dollying; and heaps of broken quartz lay around its base; whilst a pick, shovel and dish lay rusting on its gritted surface.

With burning interest Sam scrutinised all exposed quartz, here and at the outcrop; he continued his examination for a couple of hours, finding the colour, and nothing more. But the cap of the reef was gone—rich, poor, or middling, as it might have been. Apparently it had been too poor to justify further development; and Sam became thoroughly sobered by this anticlimax to his day-dreams. But even an abandoned claim was something to go on with; so he resolved to return to the spot, re-furnished, and prove the reef to his own full satisfaction.

When the afternoon was half gone the sun appeared in a direction which Sam had tentatively taken as south-east. Now, after carefully confirming the cardinal points in their normal places, he started eastward, pausing now and then to look back toward the reef, thus impressing upon his mind the aspect of a returning route. This led him to notice that the track was slightly blazed; also that the marks were a year old, and had been made with a sharp tomahawk.

It is a noteworthy fact, that two men—or a dozen—passing separately through difficult country, bound for the same destination, are likely to walk in the very footsteps of each other. The reason is, that the same alternatives of route are accepted, independently, by each.

Hence, as it happened, Sam continued to leave behind him blazed trees and marked scrub till he reached a precipitous descent, with the opposing bluff so near and yet so far that two men might have

played quoits across the massed foliage of tall trees growing in the intervening chasm.

To the strong, lithe young bushman the descent, though steep, was safe and easy till within 50 or 60 feet of the bottom. Here a sloping face of sandstone, 8 or 10 feet in height, formed part of the bluff; and from this downward the bramble-clad ground appeared vertical, but with a practicable slope extending to the right. A glance to each side showed that there was no avoiding this smooth rock, with the scanty foothold at its base; so Sam promptly lowered himself down the scarp, and let go. The toes of his boots failed to grip ground as he landed on the sharp angle—he reeled backward, and fell headlong—rolling—rebounding—bursting through impediments of interlocked undergrowth—till a final and opportune impulsion flung him across the stony bed of the creek, with a clear fall of about 15 feet.

Whilst rolling down the bluff, Sam had disputed his passage yard by yard, with a dogged resolution which debarred thought. But the decimal of a second occupied by his helpless fall was surcharged with reflections suitable to the situation. He thought of his mother, and of Molly. The thought of his mother was connected with injunctions against Sabbath-breaking; the thought of Molly implied the highest compliment applicable to woman, inasmuch as it forecast a maiden widowhood for life. . . Then he crashed into a heap of yielding drift, deposited by the swollen current of many winters. But the crown of his head touched—just touched—a block of sandstone among the debris, and he lay very still.

Night had fallen, chill and starless, before he regained consciousness. For some time he strove vainly to array his disordered faculties; but at last the events of the day came into something like consecutive order. Though sore, stiff, and terribly shaken, he was relieved to find that no bones were broken, and that his pipe, matches and tobacco were safe. With benumbed and shivering fingers he lit the mass of dry brushwood from which he had just risen. The warmth revived him, but the dull pain of a cut on the head made time pass heavily. He attempted to bathe his wound, but the sting of the icy cold water forced him to desist.

However, he had learnt by heart the burden of a thousand hymns, namely, that religion is the unfailing solace of all woes; and reverently took his teraphim from the inside pocket of his jacket. But as the first strong flare of the fire had subsided, he rose to light an adjacent heap of drift, against the opposite bank of the shrunken rivulet. And

the blaze of his firestick disclosed a spectacle which held him dazed and incredulous.

A death's head stared upward in his face; the head thrown backward in a small concavity; the shoulders reclined against the bank; whilst the hands and lower limbs were buried in last winter's drift. Imagining now that his own mental balance was disturbed Sam kindled a large fire where its light would shine full on the appalling object. The skin was like parchment, drawn back from the hollow orbits, and stretched tensely across the angular bones of face and head. The hair, thinned by decay, left the whitened scalp exposed. The lips had shrunk back, exposing two rows of perfect teeth in a silent, sinister laugh; and a thick red beard concealed the neck. The portion of clothing visible above the drift was bleached to a uniform neutral.

A gruesome companion in the dark; so Sam sedulously fed the fire all night, whilst furtively watching the silent figure, which often seemed to move uneasily in its place, with expression of face varying from sardonic mirth to the very ecstasy of woe; from immovable patience to utter despair. Along with this, the nocturnal sounds of the bush, homely and pleasing at ordinary times, now startled the harassed watcher into vague apprehension and he fervently welcomed the first hint of dawn.

Before the last shadow lifted, he was slowly and laboriously skirting the base of the treacherous bluff, on his homeward journey. Bare-headed, stiff, sore and hungry, his progress was slow enough, yet he pressed on, keeping the impracticable bed of the creek on his left, and always in sight. The day was cloudy; but from occasional glimpses of the sun he conceived the course of the creek to be far less direct than had appeared in following the stream upward. And even to his disturbed perception the country seemed more open, with fewer blackweeds in the hollows, and more thickets of mountain ash on the heights.

Presently the creek merged into a morass which he did not remember to have noticed in the haste and toil of his upward trip. This was a rotten quagmire, of 100 yards in diameter, bordered with overgrown sedges, and supporting strange, rank, unspecialised growths in its pulpy surface. The creek reappeared at the opposite extremity of the swamp; and Sam followed its course over comparatively easy ground for some hours, till a careful survey from the shoulder of a lofty promontory disclosed faint films of smoke coiling upward from the creek a little way in front. This, he concluded, would be from the hollow log he had left burning at his first camp. There he would rest

awhile, and the familiar scene would adjust and verify his bearings. Twenty minutes later he emerged from a thicket of fern-trees to find the smouldering embers of his last night's fire, sentinelled by that grisly form recumbent against the bank.

Baffled and bewildered, Sam stretched himself on the ground to work out the puzzle. How had he made this circuit? Not by turning down the creek; and he had returned from the west, still following the stream. But now the sun was gone from the sky, shining only on the tops of tall trees; and he was tired, very tired. To-morrow he would watch his way more carefully, and force the solution of this enigma.

He had burned all the firewood within easy reach, except the mass of drift in which his companion lay embedded; but removal of his camp never suggested itself. The dead man held him—not as a captive, but as a fate-allotted guest. All night he crouched by a small fire, alert and apprehensive. Each sudden call of a nocturnal bird or marsupial made him start. The dewdrops on bracken and heath, trembling in the firelight against invisible background, became the watchful eyes of living things unknown to bushcraft. His eyes burned for lack of sleep, but the throbbing pain of the wound on his head kept him awake and distracted. And when weird fancies came thickest he began to find reassurance in the companionship of that silent figure whose very immobility brought relief.

In the grey dawn he cast one farewell look round the spot which had grown so grimly familiar. He laid his fingers on the dew-dripping brow of his unresponsive companion—"Good-bye, old man", he murmured gently; then turned eastward to thread his way through the maze of logs and scrub which confronted his outset.

More slowly than before, because more carefully, he followed the deeply cloven gorge, where, beneath logs, scrub, and denuded rocks, the shrunken stream found its way. From time to time he noted his tracks on the previous trip, and pressed on, guarding against repetition of the incomprehensible blunder which had wasted one precious day. Again he skirted the deep morass, and resumed the course of the creek at its effluence. There was no other route, for the morass lay in the concavity of a vast horse-shoe range which formed an unbroken bank to the creek on the opposite side, for some distance above and below. Still more tracks of the preceding day, and scenes which he recognised at a glance; yet he struggled on, in dogged certainty that no error had been possible.

But when the long afternoon was half-spent he stood looking once more upon his charnel camp. It was no dream. There lay the

ashes of his fires; and at his feet reclined the wasted form of his forerunner. For a full hour he sat with his back against the opposite bank, fronting that awful host, who would not let him go; till at last his deranged thought found refuge in an overmastering sympathy. He mused on the long, lonely winter nights, with their frost and rain—the pitiless exposure, the grievous dishonour, perforce so passively borne. And the injustice of it! For no soldier, fallen with face to the foe, had better earned two paces of that kindly earth which becomingly covers man's ultimate indignity.

With his sheath knife he cut and chisel-pointed a stout stem of mountain ash; then, selecting a spot above the highest flood-mark, he dug a shallow grave into the side of the steep bank. Then removing the drift which covered the lower part of the remains he searched the pocket for means of identification; but found only a rusty knife, an empty purse, and a few illegible papers. And whilst composing the poor, light relics in the grave he discovered that one leg was broken above the knee. From the upper side of the grave he dug down sufficient earth to form a mound; and finally he cut a conspicuous cross in the soft bark of a white gum close by.

The removal of the skeleton had rendered a large bank of drift available as fuel; and Sam, still under the fascination of the camp, had no thought of changing his quarters. The dusk was now settling down, and he was about to light the drift when his eye fell on a small canvas bag, blackening in decay, which had been under the right hand of the corpse. The bag was almost too rotten to hold together; but he found it to contain a quantity of reef gold, which judgment—unaffected in accuracy, though lethargic in operation—estimated at 50 or 60 oz. This he collected in his large cotton handkerchief, and laid aside. No wave of gratification, no reaction of even momentary buoyance, broke the cheerless stupor of his consciousness. Yet here was a dazzling response to his search of two days before—the reef-harvest of millenniums—the crop which has no second growth—the imperishable gold, liberated by slow decomposition of its matrix through uncounted ages of serial denudation.

But Sam, uneasily aware of encroaching aberration, dreaded the coming night. During daylight he was conscious of a lessening power of consecutive thought, and a futile activity of memory in recalling irrelevant snatches of songs, phrases from Scripture, and even nursery rhymes; and along with this, an increasing difficulty in separating actuality from illusion. Still he was master of his own individuality, and prepared to face any tangible mishap.

But night transported him to another world; a world of shapeless shadows, more formidable than actualities. To neutralise the invasion of these dreadful legions he laboured to provide an enormous fire, using the remaining heap of drift as a base. The narrow area of the camp being now illuminated in every recess, he lay down to rest; and again his burning eyes craved the sleep which his unsettled mind repelled.

In the optical night-effect of a bush-fire, or a large campfire, the most remarkable impression—strangely overlooked by artists—is the startling conspicuousness of the branches overhead, stretching in ivory-white relief across the unfathomable blackness of foliage and sky above; though those branches may be grey or slate-coloured by daylight. Many a time had Sam contemplated this spectacle with casual interest; but now his judgment was in abeyance, his sense of comparison paralysed; and that odd filigree of white became a medley of dismembered skeletons gathered from forgotten graves and wind-swept plains and lonely mountain fastnesses to enact purposeless horrors in the midnight air. And forthwith his fevered fancy found occupation in classifying those lawless relics, each vital with a life impassive, insensate, and free from the limitations of flesh and blood. For though dead calm lay on the deep gorge, a strong gusty wind convulsed the treetops; and the livid limbs advanced, retired, writhed and squirmed, reeled and capered, in a veritable dance of death; whilst, aiding this wild hallucination, the rising and falling sough of the variable blast supplied hollow toneless music to the hideous carnival.

Morally driven to bay, appalled yet unterrified, Sam marked those rhythmic movements of the living dead, till his satiated glance ran down the long, white shaft of an adjacent tree, and rested on the new-made grave at its foot. He watched and waited, momentarily expecting a movement of the fresh soil, and a reappearance of the grisly form which he had unavailingly laid to rest. This fearful relaxation recurred to the ghastly yet grotesque saturnalia in progress above, till daylight brought back the comfortless realities of his situation.

No condition of mind is more definitely graduated than insanity. Sam rose from his lair strong with the wasteful energy of confirmed derangement. The development of more violent phases would be a question of temperament and circumstances. From mere force of habit he glanced searchingly round the camp before starting. Besides the pile of gold on the handkerchief, he noted the head of a small American tomahawk, lying red-hot among the coals of his fire. He raked the tomahawk into a shallow pool of water; and when cooled,

placed it carefully with the gold; then he bound the parcel with many knots, and slung it on the back of his snakehook belt. All this was done mechanically, with perhaps some nebulous appreciation of value, but without discrimination. Then he stubbornly resumed his twice-trodden route down the creek, altogether oblivious to the likelihood of another circuitous journey.

A quarter of an hour later—prompted rather by the cunning of lunacy than by legitimate caution—he forced his way down through the confusion of logs and under-growth, to make sure the creek was there. Satisfied on this point, he resumed his difficult way; and, after another short interval, went to the trouble of repeating his verification. But now the rivulet was running in the opposite direction.

The simple fact was that each point of inspection was on a different branch of the main creek, the fatal bluff being in the junction. Both branches had their origin in the morass already described, and each found its contorted and roundabout way to the base of the bluff, the two thus enclosing an irregular island. And Sam had twice skirted the enclosed area, bearing on his left one or other of the concealed and shrunken affluents.

But now the reversal of the current brought him no enlightenment. His inductive faculties were wrecked; and only the blind, stubborn instinct of a homing animal prompted him to follow the creek downward, however the current might attempt to outwit and elude him.

He therefore crossed the trickle of water, and scrambled painfully on, still keeping the creek warily in view on his left. In another hour even his deranged perception became cognisant, from time to time, of a certain dateless familiarity in the brief panoramic glimpse which unfolded as he struggled on—a dull recognition of physical features noted at some former time; and with this came a shapeless confidence which sustained his failing strength.

On the warm brow of a hill fronting the sun he gathered some handfuls of ripe bramble-berries, without which he would probably have collapsed. Despite his magnificent constitution, it was becoming a near thing, in every way. The sedative supplied occasionally by a few whiffs of tobacco just served as partial ballast to his staggering reason; whilst the influence of his fetish barely sustained those vital forces so harshly taxed to physical and mental stress.

When the falling darkness made progress no longer possible, he kindled a fire and stretched himself beside it, alive only to the torture

of wakefulness, and the throbbing pain of his inflamed scalp wound. Removed from the associations of his former gruesome camp, he gave little heed to the eerie shapes which watched him from every bush, and from behind every tree.

With the first grey light of dawn he resumed his way, climbing the opposing hill on his hands and knees, till the numbness passed from his swollen feet. But now the bush was more open, and the ground less steep, with slightly beaten tracks and traces of prospecting. And just as the sun glinted on the tree-tops above, he stood on a low hill overlooking the Bagh, with his own bark hut clearly in view. It was exactly six days since he had crossed that hill on his outward trip.

Smoke was issuing from several chimneys on the camp; but a queer instinct of exclusiveness, a dread of publicity and comment, led him straight to his own hut, which happened to be one of the nearest. Home at last; and he jealously closed the door behind him

First he lay down on his bunk, and was immediately reminded of the hard, angular package on his belt. This package, by its heavy sagging, had caused him much discomfort on the way; now, with a hazy feeling of relief, he disengaged it, and dropped it into a pocket formed by a half cornsack nailed loosely against the wall. Then, though exhaustion had deadened the sharp cravings of hunger, he thought of food. There was half a loaf of baker's bread in the mouse-proof "swinging cheffonier", and a drip of tea, black and bitter, in the billy by the hearth. He ate some of the bread, after soaking it in the tea; then leaned back against the wall sick, giddy, disgusted, and willing at last to relinquish all endeavour, and be at peace—at peace.

There was a knock at the door, and a voice—Or did he dream? Or had he unknowingly crossed the boundary, and entered the Hereafter? No; he was self-consciously alive and awake——

"Is there anyone in?"

He was silent. With an effort of reason he resolved that his own doubtful sanity should have a conclusive test. If the voice was real, it would sound again——

Another knock, and the question was repeated in the same clear, silvery tone. Now for the test.

He staggered to the door, and opened it; then, with both hands on the low wall-plate, he stood looking down with delirious, bloodshot eyes into that seraph face which through the recent vicissitudes had been his pillar of cloud by day and his pillar of fire by night. For it was Molly herself, sweet, ethereal, despotic as *Home, Sweet Home*

on the violin; and Sam's disordered mind accepted the certainty, without surprise at her unexpected appearance. But Molly's countenance changed when confronted by this apparition of her lover; ragged of attire, wild-eyed, haggard, soiled and blood-stained.

"O Sam! Where have you been?"

He reflected for a moment, and shook his head; then replied with an effort, "I've been where Afric's sunny fountains roll down their golden sand". The sound of his own voice brought confidence, and he added gravely. "Truth is stranger than fiction, Molly. Everything is alive, with a life of its own; and we're all dead, if we only knew it. But I came through, in spite of all their plots."

"Of course you did", she replied genially, yet with whitening lips. "But why don't you rest?" she continued, drawing him to the seat from which he had risen. As he sat down, her eyes fell on the gaping, sun-dried wound on his head, with its added ghastliness of blackened blood and embedded hair. She caught her breath, glanced searchingly round the unfurnished den, and remarked calmly:

"I see you have a cut on your head. Wait one moment."

She vanished through the door, but returned almost immediately. "Just stay where you are, and let me pull your boots off." She knelt before him grasping the toe and heel of one of his knee boots. It was locked on the swollen foot. "The leather nearly burns my fingers", she remarked, placing her hand on the tensely stretched instep. "Is this sharp?" she continued, snatching Sam's sheath-knife. "Yes, it's fine." In a few seconds each foot came from the opened boot like a plaster cast from its mould. Then her scissors—professional armoury, you bet—ran down the side of each sock, exposing a pair of feet just in the condition that might have been expected.

Here two women bustled into the hut; one bearing a bucket of hot water, the other carrying a tub and a basket. Two other women followed—all close neighbours and warm friends of Sam. Molly gave her attention to the scalp wound, whilst superintending several sub-contracts; and Sam, though awkwardly resenting, and unavailingly resisting, the sudden inundation of feminine service, rapidly sustained a great renovation. Meanwhile, another woman came; then to Sam's relief, three men. Molly kept them all busy or in attendance; and in a few minutes Sam forgot his own ignominy in the absorption of a liberal allowance of porridge, cunningly doctored with port wine.

But Molly knew (though Sam himself did not) that all the energy so recklessly discounted during the last few days had begun to levy

on the drawer for full satisfaction and refund. She therefore caused her feminine serfs to clear up the wreckage; then called upon two masculine vassals to place Sam carefully in bed. By this time, he could scarcely move a limb.

In five minutes he had fallen into a sleep that no noise could disturb; and all his everyday friends had gone about their business—that business being to discuss Molly, and her unexpected appearance on the Bagh. Meanwhile, though watching over Sam like a mother, she had found time to unfold her business to the bondwoman first subjugated.

She was the eldest of her family. Her father, a tenant farmer, had attended land lotteries till he was tired, without getting a call. But as this was the only means of obtaining land in those days, he resolved on one more attempt. Molly obtained leave of absence, in order to double his chance; her two brothers being under age, and her two intermediate sisters disqualified by marriage. But the old man's luck had turned. He got an early call, and secured a fine allotment of 320 acres. A few more calls; then Molly's name was shouted to the four winds of heaven. She had a carefully compiled list, and the officials assisted her choice to the utmost; so she was enabled to secure a fine half-section with creek frontage. Now, her father already had as much as he could manage; and the allotments were 17 miles apart. Her selection was worth at least £3 an acre beyond its cost—in fact, it was a bonus from the State of more than £1,000. But the selection was not transferable; moreover the conditions of residence and improvement were imperative, under penalty of forfeiture. And now she had come to ascertain whether Sam could suggest any way out of the predicament. This explanation, filtering rapidly through the camp, met with general approval, for Sam was a favourite.

That casual young citizen awoke from a dream of strenuous and futile climbing to find himself in bed at home, with head bandaged but painless, and limbs that required circumspection in the slightest movement. It was night again—not that Night which means a miasmatic exhalation of earth, teeming with uncanny battalions on furlough from the Pit; but rather the Night which descends as a benediction from heaven, to seasonably veil the field of effort, and impart to weary and heavy-laden pilgrims the anodyne of rest. A true Australian night, laden with peace and restoration, most meetly typified by the woman's form which noiselessly passed from a candle-lighted space into the tranquil shadow where Sam lay.

"Are they all gone?" he asked.

"Who, Sam?"

"They have no name. They tried to stop me, but it seems I got away at last. Curious how you appear in sight when they vanish. O Molly! don't *you* disappear too!"

"No; I'm too solid to disappear. There; there; there; now do you believe it's me, you goose?"

She removed the extemporised screen; and he saw that his own familiar alarm clock registered half-past three.

"What day is this, Molly?"

"Sunday's just in. December the 30th."

"Nineteen hours and twenty minutes."

He was silent for a space, but his mind was very busy.

"What brought you all this way so suddenly, Molly?"

"That's more than I can tell you, Sam. On Christmas evening there was a feeling grew upon me that I ought to be with you. I tried to reason myself out of it, and kept my mind fixed on my duties; but it was no use. I couldn't rest. I wrote two letters, trying to relieve my uneasiness—they must be here in the post office now. And the matron couldn't let me go, for we were short-handed, on account of holidays. But on Wednesday there came a letter from a competent nurse, applying for a position. By that time I was just in the humour to stir things up; and you may be sure I did. Anyway, after two or three telegrams went back and forward, this nurse was safe on the way; and I just fled by the night train. Then on Thursday I caught the coach, and next day your mailman's buggy. So I got here on Friday night; and the people at the store found me very nice lodgings with a family close by. They told me you were out prospecting; but in the morning I came over to your hut, in hopes you might have got back. And I wasn't a bit too soon—was I? You didn't get that letter I wrote when the lottery was over? No; you negligent thing, you don't deserve to hear the good news."

Then she told the story of her selection. "Of course, this was the only account I gave to your neighbours", she added. "They might think I was bold."

Sam was silent and pensive, not to say glum. Molly was the light of his life; but he shrank from facing the future as Mrs. Boyd's job lot. Moreover the glamour of gold—which is by no means another name for avarice—was on him. And Molly's intuition, keen as a two-edged sword, was following his insubordinate thought through all its equivocations. At length he spoke, with some constraint.

"Fact is, Molly, I've found a reef; and I must go back to it as soon as possible."

"Then you'd better clod me away from your old sanctum at once", she retorted brokenly. She had inspected her land on the day following the lottery and had found it transformed by anticipation into a new Eden. And land-frenzy is as tyrannous as gold-witchery. Half-sorrowfully, half-resentfully, she continued. "O Sam; don't you know that you've been delirious? You've been rambling, and climbing and famishing, when you should have been under medical treatment, and you've had strange delusions of reefs, and gold, and unburied bones, and all sorts of wild imaginations. I've pieced a lot of things together while you were asleep."

"Perhaps I *have* had a touch of temperance horrors", replied Sam doubtfully, "Seems like it, anyway. But don't fret, Molly. I'll agree with anything you propose, when you've heard my story. What day did you say this was?"

"Sunday morning."

He paused, in deep thought; then recounted the story of his adventures and mishaps; frequently returning upon his narrative to master the sequence of events, and, of course, laying equal stress upon real and fancied phenomena. Despite his recovered balance of mind, there was no standard by which he could disentangle abnormal actualities and corresponding hallucinations. "And now, Molly", he concluded, "how much delusion is there in that?"

"About nine-tenths", she replied gently. "But see the daylight coming through the cracks of your horrible hut; and you ought to be ready for the fine breakfast that I'm going to share with you. Can you sit up and lean against the wall? That's right. Now I'll shift the table over—ah! fixture, I see—stuck into the floor—never mind."

Sam absently watched her improvising a table by his side; and as she began to lay it for breakfast he asked,

"But which is the one-tenth of fact?"

"Everything up to the time you fell down the precipice, you poor thing. Since that time you've done nothing but wander about these hills, quite deranged. And no wonder. O you may trust my hospital experience."

"Maybe", replied Sam dubiously. "In that case, the reef was genuine and the little bag of gold was a dream. Perhaps so. But didn't I—or did I dream I was doing it? I say, Molly! when I came home, I put the handkerchief of gold in that pocket on the wall beside you."

"Poor boy!" murmured Molly tenderly, as she up-ended a gin-case beside the table, and seated herself on it. "Now wait till I ask a blessing."

She asked a blessing; and Sam contentedly addressed himself to the best breakfast he had seen for years. But the feminine mind must clinch its victories—must scrupulously take the opponent's last draught-man off the board, instead of magnanimously turning away when the game is virtually won. So Molly continued,

"When you've had a good breakfast to strengthen you for the shock I'll take everything out of that pocket, and spread them on this table. Gold! Gold!—ah Sam, you were sure to find gold in your delirium—tons of it—and you would cling to it from a digger's force of habit."

Overruled but unconvinced, Sam changed the subject, and they talked of other things till the meal was over and the table cleared. Then with a light laugh the unrelenting girl inserted her hand in the pocket, and drew forth a small parcel, tightly bound in a red-and-white handkerchief. A slight scream broke from her lips; the bundle slipped from her shrinking fingers; and as it struck the floor she instinctively recoiled from this apparent evidence of her lover's abnormal experience. But her disciplined intelligence refused to accept external appearance as conclusive testimony. The little bundle, packed in irresponsible frenzy, would doubtless disclose some pathetic proof of a disordered mind. And indeed the fall had forced a corner of blue-rusted scrap iron through the frayed handkerchief.

She placed the package on her extemporised table, and opened the hard knots with firm, dexterous fingers. Then the heavy lustre of £200 worth of rough gold gleamed forth where the sickly candle-light struggled with advancing dawn; and the lovers' eyes met—on Molly's side, amazement and perplexity; on Sam's side, a sombre earnestness and trance-like retrospect. Not for a while did the economic value of the gold obtrude on either mind.

"Ah, Molly!" said Sam, thinking aloud; "the unfortunate chap that found it!—he perished alone, helpless and crippled! Wonder how long he had to wait for such a poor satisfaction as death! Still, he died like a man—crawling to no one! loafing on no one; independent of everyone but God."

"O Sam!" faltered Molly, also thinking aloud. "You must come away from this awful place as soon as you're able to walk. How simply somebody else might have gone prospecting afterward, and

found two dead men together"—here her voice gave way, and there was a long silence.

The rest of the story may be summarised. Molly, as a matter of course, had her way, with something to spare. Sam's surrender so far overlapped her demands that he caused her to take possession of the gold, by way of hostage. Next morning, half the population of the Bagh assembled to see her off in the mailman's buggy. A week later, Sam conducted four friends to the reef, and gave them full possession. And, according to a social-economic usage worthy of record, no compensation was asked, offered, or thought of. Then Sam followed his guiding star into a region of wider horizon and flatter landscape.

Six months later, a pack-horse track gave easy access to Christmas Reef; and the primeval silence of that wild spot was disturbed by the voices of women and children; whilst the crashing cadence of a little 4-head battery kept half a dozen echoes at work. The reef was no bonanza, but a singularly consistent claim, good enough to start its proprietors, one as a farmer; another as a store-keeper; another as a publican; and the fourth as a poultry-farmer.

The subsequent career of the Boyds has been, if anything, too calm and prosperous; so that Sam now thinks nothing of being a Shire Councillor, a J.P., and a Deacon; whilst Molly's record comes about as near perfection as the present stage of Moral Evolution will permit. And Hamlet's hobby-horse is not more completely forgotten than is the red-bearded stranger, the real discoverer of Christmas Reef.

RIGBY'S ROMANCE

Chapter VI

[Urged by A. G. Stephens, Furphy reduced the length of *Such is Life* in manuscript, by removing one of the strands of narrative, which he afterwards prepared for separate publication as *Rigby's Romance*. At first he could not find a publisher. "I cannot believe", he wrote in a letter, "that my own writing —say in *Rigby's Romance*—is as undistinguished and prosy as what I am usually forced to wade through. Yet the publishers pass it by. Such is Life. But it is a long lane that has no turning. Such, again, is Life. . . ." Finally, we are told, he presented the story, through their paper, *Barrier Truth*, to the miners of the Barrier, Broken Hill, N.S.W., "in token of his admiration of their stalwart western character and spirit". It appeared as a serial, weekly, during 1905 and 1906. The first printing in book form was the edition issued in 1921 by the C. J. DeGaris Publishing House, Melbourne, with a preface by Stephens. From this edition, however, once more for the sake of abbreviation, nine chapters—VI, XXXI-V, and XXXVII-IX—were omitted. The first of these gives a conversation in the Farmers' Arms Hotel with the German, Fritz, who has been introduced in Chapter V. This chapter is important as providing the incentive for the congregation on the river-bank. Without it the reference in Chapter VIII (renumbered VII) to "the escaped thirty-pounder" has no antecedent; nor has Fritz's love-story, which is related in the present Chapter XVI. Chapter VI also provides another example of Furphy's skill in recording, with humorous effect, modes of speech. The publisher of *Rigby's Romance* perhaps thought the German-English of Fritz too difficult for a reader to follow; it becomes as clear as was intended, however, when read aloud.

The other omitted chapters consist of episodes in the religious and social discussions between Rigby, Collins and the rest of the fishing party.

For its importance and interest, the original Chapter VI is reproduced below.]

> As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
> After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
> Are idly bent on him that enters next,
> Thinking his prattle to be tedious.
>
> *King Richard II.* Act V, Scene ii.

After relieving Bunyip of his load, I sought out the Major, and went into the bar with him to purchase the freedom of the house, inviting the shocking example out on the verandah to join us in a drink. The old gentleman, of course, took a long-sleever, looking with ostentatious pity at the Doctor's sarsaparilla and my Chateau Tabilk.

"Your goot helt, yentlemence", said the moral beacon, dipping his heavy ashen moustache in the froth. "Peer vor der Yarmance, unt Yarmany vor der peer", he continued, setting down the pewter pot. "Minezelluf, I schall be ver podicle mit mine trinks. Ven der Yarmance knog (sheol) der Vrench mit dot last var, he vas pe der peer unt der nettle-gon, unt der vine unt der chassepot. Vat der platty (sheol)? Eh?"

KATE BAKER, O.B.E. (1937)

(Block: Angus and Robertson Ltd.)

"Very true, Fritz", observed Rigby.

"Well, I'll be (penalised) to (sheol)", remarked a deep voice, in mechanical forecast; and a captivating aroma of serene iniquity seemed to be wafted in on our company, as the lithe figure, and handsome, sunburnt face of Dixon, the bullock driver, appeared at the door. He shook hands cordially with me. "Come, what'll you have, chaps? Mine's a meejum shandy."

The colonel and I had a good excuse for declining. Fritz drained his pint with alacrity.

"Minezelluf, I vill your helt trink mit von long peer. Peer vor der Yarmance, unt Yarmany vor——"

"Any letters for Robert Dixon or Stephen Thompson, Boss?" interrupted the bullock driver.

"I'll see in half a minute", replied the young landlord, as he served the two drinks.

"Unt Yarmany vor der peer", pursued the Teuton. "Minezelluf, I schall pe ver podicle mit mine trinks. Ven der Yarmance knog (sheol) der Vrench——"

"And you think the beer had something to do with the result of the Franco-German war?" I suggested hastily, though civilly.

Fritz set his pint on the counter, and clapped me gently on the shoulder, while a feeble smile crept over his sodden features.

"Mine zteb-zon, Yimmy, schall pe der yong man der par mit", he remarked with more dignity than relevancy.

"Can't suffer these (adj.) foreigners, no road, Rigby", observed Dixon, calmly indicating Fritz with a backward jerk of his thumb. "Nobody should be allowed in the (adj.) country only Europeans, like me an' you. Ain't it aggravatin' to hear the gibberage these fellers comes out with? Wonder why the (adj. sheol) they never learn to yabber grammatical?"

"Minezelluf, ass der nettif moch petter ve schall der platty Angleech zpeag", retorted Fritz sternly. "Peen-goot; volang—villeen; assylum—soss-yetty; der goot-villeen soss-yetty. Eh? Dot gnog you into der gocked hat."

"You're a scholar, Fritz", said I politely.

"Mine vrent", replied the translator, again laying his hand on my shoulder, "der Yarmance vos off Got pe der man high rise mit. Vot vos you glory Gveen? Von Yarmance. Vot vos you nople Brince? Von Yarmance. Minezelluf, I schall von Yarmance be, unt brout mit. Eh?"

But Fritz's countercheck quarrelsome had not passed unmarked by Dixon. The bullock driver had listened with amused interest, as

to the winsome prattle of a child; and his eye still dwelt benevolently on the German whilst the latter spoke to me. Then, after a deferential pause, Dixon removed his pipe from his mouth with a delicate movement of wrist and fingers, and suavely turned to the Colonel.

"Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus (adj.) mus", he observed in a compassionate tone and with faultless precision of accent. "Same time, it shows the feller's got a sort o' dim idear o' things. Quite common to see this (adj.) cravin' for a bit o' knowledge among the profanum (adj.) vulgus. Comes sort o' hard on a pore (individual) to feel his self no better'n a vox et praeterea (adj.) nihil, as the sayin' is. Don't it strike you that way, Rigby?"

"No letters for Dixon; one for Thompson; forwarded from Hay; fourpence to pay on it", said the landlord, as he re-entered the bar and handed a letter to Dixon.

"Well, I'll be (adj.) well toddling", said the bullock driver with magnificent apathy, when he had settled the liability. "You'll stop with us, Collins? Straight down the (adj.) fence."

"Right, Dixon, I saw Thompson today coupling his steers."

"Dot Domson, he cash der platty riffer dees mornin' got-vish von dirty-boundher, he tell me der vrog mit", said Fritz, rallying from his discomfiture, yet looking beseechingly at Dixon, who leant languidly against the doorpost contemplating a magpie on the fence at the other side of the road.

"What became of her?" asked Dixon indulgently, though still finding more interest in the magpie than in Fritz.

"Pag vonce more yomp mit der pank, plop, unt to (sheol) go", replied the German, pressing eagerly into the good graces of this fencer to the Sophy.

A critical situation for Dixon. If he gave ready credence to the news, he would at best place himself in the position of a man receiving information; at worst he would be the victim of a sell. If he threw doubt on a statement which would probably prove to be true, his own dignity would be trailed in the dust. If he didn't reply at all, he would be open to the imputation of not knowing a thing that Fritz knew and being too dirty-flash to ask. A splendid and careless magnanimity was the true policy here.

"Didn't hear nothin' about it", he replied, with a generous but futile effort to share the childish solicitude which, by cruel contrast with his own indifference, was eating into Fritz's dignity. "But then, Thompson cleared off middlin' early, an' I turned out middlin' late. Anyhow, I ain't surprised; the (adj.) river's fallin' like (sheol)."

And relapsing into his lethargy, he sauntered away.

A LETTER OF FURPHY'S TO WILLIAM CATHELS

June 15.03

My dear fellow pilgrim,

You are not to suppose my default in writing to arise from forgetfulness of a friend so well worth remembering, the fact is that it arises from circumstances over which I have no control, namely my own ignorance and procrastination.

And I am about the busiest man in Shep for when the Adamic penalty of each day has been duly paid my labor of love—ignorance shifting—just begins.

Apropos, wasn't it Graham's Socialis—Old & New that you recommended—Well, I have been very carefully through that work and I should like the task of reviewing it. I should like to discuss it with you. And in addition to the labor of stopping the Himalaya before referred to I'm plodding steadily through with, I hope the final copy of my magnum opus. I want to get the beggar off my hands, for I've got no end of new literary inspirations that only want working out.

I've got to p. 367 and I don't think I'm a ⅓ through yet. I'll get you to look over it. I'm inexpressibly glad of your suggestion re the flaw in T. Collins's reasoning on the position & functions of the criminal judge. You remember? Do you think I therefore struck out the tirade? Nary a strike. I just worked in the third speech of Antigone in Scene V Sophocles' 'Antigone'. You'll see the bearing. I may safely say that I know no one on whose judgment or knowledge I would place such reliance as on yours, except, of course, where goaks are concerned and this reservation for obvious reasons. And I must thank you for the two papers you sent—containing particulars of Jack Jorgensen. Perhaps I told you I was intimate with poor Johanna in '77 and afterwards knowing her sex worked her into my opus as Nosey Alf, the boundary rider, Cooper's sister supposed to have suicided, though the narrator, Collins, never thinks of establishing the connection. In a recent letter my friend Baker of the Guards complains that like the rest of our unreliable sex Mr. Cathels wasn't worth a dam for keeping appointments. Perhaps these were not exactly Baker's words, but they contain the substance of his complaint. Of course, I explained that on account of having dined, Cathels took the wrong train—or words to that effect—and endorsed your own suggestion that we go hand in hand to Wills* & at Christmas.

* Williamstown.

Now negligence & laziness being, as I know from rigid self analysis the tokens of a great mind, I don't expect you to reply for some months. But *do* post a paper or circular or something as evidence of being still a cumberer.

I should mention that Rodgers & Gourlay have been blaggarding me for not writing, & are looking forward to another visit from you.

J F

FURPHY AND O'DOWD

Furphy and O'Dowd were akin in their democratic Australianism and in their love and range of learning. For this reason, Furphy cherished a great admiration of O'Dowd. "He is an ideal democrat", he wrote to C. H. Winter, ". . . able and scholarly, strong and sympathetic, temperate and uncompromising, absolutely without fear and without reproach." Again, to Miles Franklin, he said: "Of all democrats, here and elsewhere, Bernard O'Dowd comes nearest to my ideal." He paid tribute, too, to "the academic splendour" of O'Dowd.

O'Dowd must have reciprocated this admiration, for in 1916 he introduced the collection of Furphy's poems made by Kate Baker. Here O'Dowd praised him as "a pure generous lover of men, essential democracy and Australia". O'Dowd's own most noted poem, "The Bush", may derive from a passage in Chapter II of *Such is Life* (that on the bush, beginning "It is not in our cities or townships" and ending "And I, for one, will never believe the trail of the serpent to be so indelible that barefaced incongruity must dog the footsteps of civilisation"), just as this passage may itself owe something to Marcus Clarke's famous reflections on Australian scenery in the preface to Gordon's poems. Clarke was of course prompted by Gordon's often quoted and usually misinterpreted lines on the flora and fauna of Australia, lines to which he refers in his preface.

R.G.H.

DICTA FURPHIANA

Australia is the unit.

Aut Australia aut nihil.

If a man started at, say 7, and wasted *no* time, he might begin to know something at 70.

SUCH IS LIFE

The Title and the Structure of the Book

By A. G. Mitchell

The Title

Mr. Hartley Grattan has judged *Such Is Life* "a trite title for a superb book".* Mr. A. K. Thomson, in the best article so far written on Furphy, demurs to the extent of saying that Furphy "is giving us life as he knows it, life such as it is; and 'Such Is Life' is a good title for a true and superb book".† But I think we may go further than this. Furphy has indicated that *Such Is Life* is more than a meaningful and appropriate title. It is a theme followed out not only in separate parts but also in the whole fabric of the book.

Such Is Life is trite, and we need not suspect that Furphy had any delusions about its originality. He had as quick an eye as the next for "original remarks" (see p. 79). But the expression has, in Furphy's use of it, the more significance for being well worn.

In its common use "Such Is Life" is merely an expression of surprise at odd happenings, and there are plenty of events and situations in *Such Is Life* that invite the remark. Things happen contrary to, or in even apparent mockery of what the most careful forethought plans or allows for. A good example occurs in the story of Baradyuk which appears in this issue. Baradyuk is running to retrieve a spear, his enemy behind him. Furphy tells us that he glanced back over his shoulder. The reader is left to surmise what he saw, his enemy about to hurl a boomerang, or a boomerang in flight towards him. He makes a swift calculation and jumps high in the air. When he reaches the ground the boomerang strikes him between the legs and brings him down helpless. In the time that it took for him to jump and return to the ground Baradyuk might have been several yards further on, and the boomerang would have fallen behind him. If he had not looked back and become aware of his danger, if, being aware, he had done nothing to avoid the danger, he would have been safe. The very thing that a man does, by skilled and trained judgment, to avoid a danger, is the means of his undoing. The example from *Such Is Life* that remains most vividly in the memory is the story of the wanderer who died near Rory's house. As Collins approaches Rory's house he sees a man, apparently wriggling himself into a more comfortable position beneath a vine-covered tree. Collins' first impulse is to approach the

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* *Australian Literature*, 1929.

† *Meanjin Papers*, II, 3, 21.

man with a friendly greeting, but he checks himself. It is two hours before sunset, and the proper time for a swagman to approach the house is at sunset, when it is too dark for work on the woodheap. So Collins decides he will allow the swagman to choose his own time. In the morning he asks Rory whether he sees many swagmen about. Rory tells Collins he had heard of a man half-blind with sandy blight making for Ivanhoe. He adds that a week or ten days before he had found a swag and noticed some tracks, and felt sure that both belonged to the man with the sandy blight. Collins asks Rory immediately to come with him to the creeper-covered tree. There he finds the swagman dead, "not of thirst alone, but of mere physical exhaustion, sealed by the final collapse of hope". "Such is Life", says Collins, "and such is death". There is an appalling incongruity between the trivial, light-hearted reason for Collins' checking his natural impulse to speak to the man, and the consequences of his action. The difference between life and death for the wanderer was a five minutes' space of time: "Likely he had heard the cocks crowing at your place before daylight, and was making for the sound, only that the light beat him, and he gave it best five minutes too soon." Five minutes and a seemingly unimportant decision amount to the difference between life and death.

Such Is Life abounds in incidents of this kind, on larger and smaller scales; happenings which not only mock the most careful judgment and patient forethought but which twist themselves into stranger shapes than invention could contrive.

Or we may meet an unexpected coincidence so pat to the circumstances that it seems to have been contrived by a watchful deity for his own amusement and the moral correction of the persons concerned, "a conjuncture, in fact, which for the moment threw us both staggering back on the theology of childhood" (281). But these are only parts of the larger puzzle, the "engaging problem", life. As we read on "such is life" takes on, as I have no doubt Furphy intended, a deeper significance.

Every man, using whatever powers of perception and reasoning he possesses, tries to find a hypothesis which will explain his own experiences and those of others. He brings to the test of his experiences hypotheses which claim to offer a satisfying solution. Furphy makes it increasingly clear that no single hypothesis of which he knows will explain more than part of the complex pattern of experience as he observes it. Those who rely upon a single philosophical or religious explanation are compelled either to imagine that there

must be reason and regularity where none can be observed or to shrug the shoulders at happenings which defy their principles of judgment.

Take, for example, the question of providence, which constantly exercises Furphy's mind. There are three rather obvious qualities attributed in literature to the spirit or force sustaining and governing the universe in its relationship to man, benevolence, malevolence, indifference (the impersonal "It" of Hardy). There is a fourth described by Shakespeare:

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.

Furphy represents all four ideas, either explicitly through one of his characters or implicitly through a series of events seen against a background of individual character, motive, responsibility, intention. For example Stewart of Kooltopa, a just and prosperous man, is satisfied that there exists a guiding and benevolent providence, and sees its workings where another might not so easily discern them. There is a significance in Furphy's choosing Stewart as the representative of this philosophy. The man who has prospered and has done nothing that would bring him under the displeasure of a just though benevolent providence may readily conclude thus. One who has prospered but has committed wrongs of selfishness and cruelty would be a hypocrite to state his belief in a just and benevolent providence. To make such a man its representative would be to impugn the belief. But Stewart, universally respected, can state the view without hypocrisy and self-righteousness. But as Stewart speaks, a question gradually rises to the surface in the reader's mind. A man tends to set his deserts, as he reckons them, against his prosperity and his sufferings. What of the just who have not only not prospered but have also been denied, through no fault of their own, even the bare necessities of food and shelter, though they have earned much more? The question is never stated but Furphy has the power of stimulating his reader's mind to speculations on other sides of a matter that has been raised.

But the effect is much more powerful when one or other of these ideas emerges as the possible explanation of an event or set of circumstances. The explanation is not given directly by Furphy; it emerges from the narrative. The outstanding example of this is the affecting story of the lost child, in which one hypothesis is suggested at a certain stage in the story, is rejected in favour of another through succeeding events, and asserts itself again at the end. Furphy carries us through the whole range of possibilities in one story which defies full explanation on any supposition. He invites us to make what we can of it.

Rory's little girl, five years old, sets out in search of her father, taking with her some milk and half a loaf of bread. She is lost for over 72 hours and wanders for 25 miles. She is in constant danger. There are fences to become caught in, holes to fall into, dingoes prowling round her at night. Her food is exhausted and the billy thrown away. Yet for 72 hours the child is unharmed, and, only for her growing weakness, would have been found alive. A merciful providence? But the child was not found alive in spite of the most frantic efforts on the part of the searchers. A malevolent providence then? But if providence had ordained simply that the child should die and the efforts of the searchers should be in vain, why was she not brought to her end sooner through one of the many dangers that hourly confronted her? Why keep her unharmed just long enough to cheat and mock the efforts of the searchers? Steve Thompson says, realising that the odds are heavily against the child, that if she is found alive, he will lead a better life, meaning that if she is found unharmed there *must* be a guiding providence. If the searchers had found the child dead after 48 hours of wandering they would not have been surprised. If she had died five or six hours before they found her their minds would not have been tormented by the thought that a little more speed on their part might have brought them to her before she died. But what are the facts? The child is kept safe for over 72 hours, and the time between her death and their finding her is less than half an hour. Again the reader, though Furphy says nothing directly, thinks back over the whole series of events in the search and shares the torment that must have been in the minds of the searchers. The difference between life and death is less than half an hour, less than half an hour gained by the searchers or lost by the child in her wanderings. If only the alarm could have been raised sooner, if the dogs had followed the tracks, if a black-tracker could have been found sooner, if the child had not removed her shoes and so made her tracks harder to follow, if she had slept a little longer or walked a little more slowly or rested more often—the possibilities crowd into the imagination and every one a torment and a mockery. Was it, then, the gods who kill us for their sport? Then when we seem to have touched the limit of calculated cruelty in the dealings of providence with man, we hear Stevenson speaking:

" 'This Dan has much to be thankful for', remarked Stevenson, with strong feeling in his voice. 'Suppose that thunderstorm had come a few hours sooner—what then?' " If the thunderstorm had come a few hours sooner the tracks would have been obliterated and the child might never have been found. Stevenson then relates the story of

his younger brother, lost and never found. The mental torment of imagining what might have happened to him had killed his mother, driven his father insane and cast a shadow over his own life. Was the fact that the child was found at all a benevolent dispensation of providence?

We are not soon done with this story. And there can be no doubt that Furphy intended that we should think of it in this way. The story is not told for its own sake, though it is one of the best short stories ever written. Furphy is concerned with the significance of these stories, their value in supporting or refuting an idea or a point of view. The story of the lost child is related to an idea with which Furphy is constantly preoccupied—the value of a man. Thompson tells it because Bob has been judged almost a savage. He tells the story to show that in circumstances in which a child's life depended on ability to follow tracks, Bob, who had lived among blacks, was the most valuable person there. All chances of success depended upon a skill possessed by this half savage. And even more important than Bob was an old one-eyed gin who normally would not attract a second look. Circumstances may completely upset our conventional methods of reckoning the worth of a man. This is Thompson's pretext, though a pretext is not needed for telling the story.

What is the answer of the theologian to the story of Mary O'Halloran? Since God directs everything He must be responsible for that chain of events. What possible reason can there be for desiring the death of an innocent? What of God's mercy and love? Is it not a senseless waste as well as a cruelty that young life should be destroyed in its freshness and promise? The theologian replies that indeed the human intellect can nowhere perceive reason or purpose based upon justice and mercy in a happening like this. But the human mind, being limited, cannot understand the purpose of the infinite mind of God, and must be prepared to acquiesce though unwilling and not understanding. What is this but a shrug of the shoulders, "such is life"?

As with the dealings of providence so with the validity and the application of the moral law. Virtue is rewarded and wrong punished, it is said. Furphy would like to believe it. But he knows, from the evidence of his own eyes, that the innocent suffer and the wrong-doer prospers. He cannot pretend that the moral law is simple and straightforward in itself or uniformly just in its application. Furphy is concerned to show how blind hasty and conventional moral judgments may be, how much we are inclined, because we are lazy or

too easily satisfied or dishonest, to take into account only a convenient selection of the facts. In order to reveal this one-sidedness of judgment he uses his technique of the "back elevation" (40). He invites us not merely to look inside the building as well as at the façade, but to look at the back which was not intended for inspection. He applies this technique to good effect. For example we like to suppose that in our system of society the thrifty, the industrious and the righteous prosper, the shiftless and the lazy go to the wall. That is the front elevation. The rear elevation shows us the greedy, the selfish and the unscrupulous prospering, while "the weak, the diffident, the scrupulous, and the afflicted are thrust aside or trampled down". Stewart prospered partly because he was well respected, a shrewd judge of cattle and a good organiser, but *mainly because his manna never failed.* On the whole Furphy sees prosperity and hardship distributed without any reference at all to moral worth. To come by grass and water for bullocks outside the limits allowed by law is stealing. That is the front elevation. But what if grass and water is not to be had otherwise? And do not the squatters depend upon the services of bullockies whom they treat as outlaws? Thompson gives the back elevation:

> If you want a problem to work out, just consider that God constructed cattle for living on grass, and the grass for them to live on, and that, last night, and to-night and to-morrow night, and mostly every night, we've a choice between two dirty transactions—one is, to let the bullocks starve, and the other is to steal grass for them. For my own part I'm sick and tired of studying why some people should be in a position where they have to go out of their way to do wrong, and other people are cornered to that extent that they can't live without doing wrong (16).

As no single philosophical or religious hypothesis can compass the whole of observed experience so no single and consistent set of principles can embrace all problems of moral responsibility and desert. All are assailable; ultimately all who think honestly and directly are rounded up "on the one unassailable bit of standing-ground, namely, that such is life". That is where Furphy finds himself. But he rejects emphatically the despairing conclusion that life is formless and meaningless or meaningless though not formless, that the moral law is invalid and ineffective or ineffective though not invalid. Furphy has certain fundamental beliefs which he holds unassailable, respect for the dignity of all men, selflessness, sincerity, willingness to help others, and he would reject any philosophy which called these in question.

The Structure

The relationship in which Tom Collins stands to the people among whom he moves is of great importance. Tom Collins is a minor government official, a Deputy-Assistant-Sub-Inspector. He is thus important enough to be just a little above the bullock drivers and boundary riders, but not important enough to be deprived of their confidence or to make them uneasy in his presence, though they have their suspicions: "Wouldn't trust him as fur's I could sling him", said Dixon. "Too thick with the (adj.) squatters for my fancy. A man never knows what game that bloke's up to."

"Can't make him out no road", confessed Cooper. "Seems a decent, easy-goin', God-send-Sunday sort o' feller; but I'll swear there's more in his head nor a comb'll take out" (30). He is important enough and well enough educated to be on speaking terms with the station owners, but not important enough to be invited into the privacy of their houses or to share their confidences. His sympathies and interests are not intimately bound up with those of either class. He isn't exactly in the centre, just a little removed from centre on the side of the toiler and underdog. He can thus enter into the characters of both bullock drivers and station owners. Furphy puts this situation to most effective use in his description of the encounter between Montgomery and Priestley. Montgomery catches Priestley taking a short cut through his property; Collins can enter into the mind of Montgomery as Priestley cannot and into the mind of Priestley as Montgomery cannot. He can attempt mediation as no other man could. To Priestley time is precious, his bullocks in bad condition, and the regular way to his next stage longer by 28 miles than the short cut through Montgomery's property. But he does not pretend that this excuses his infringement of Montgomery's rights. Montgomery takes his stand upon his rights as a property-owner, but in common humanity allows some weight to Priestley's situation. When he orders that Priestley is to be escorted off the property and not allowed to graze his cattle until he is off the station, Collins can discern his motives. He chooses an escort who he knows will contrive to be out of sight for a suitable time when they come to some good grass.

Tom Collins' position in relationship to the people among whom he moves is nicely calculated as that of a Deputy-Assistant-Sub-Inspector with the mortuary reversion of the Assistant-Sub-Inspectorship. This position makes him a wanderer. His chief duties are to deliver K form at Mondunbarra, then to make off to Runnymede to await the arrival of M form and supervise its filling in. After days

of waiting M form still has not arrived and he is ordered to meet a superior officer at Nyngan. Thus he meets with all sorts of people at widely separated places, and he is not bound by his occupation or position to any locality or set of people.

Like himself many of his characters are wanderers through their occupation, bullock drivers, swagmen looking for casual work, contractors. When the wanderers meet news is exchanged of distant places and people long lost sight of. Characters come into the story and disappear, but there will be news of them from a bullock driver who has seen them on his latest trip.

We see Collins lying down with his hat over his eyes when he hears Thompson's voice behind him. Though he has not seen Thompson for four months he answers without even lifting his eyes. The two "conclave" chapters (1 and 5) are most important in the economy of the book. But there are certain fixed points in this life of constant movement, the great stations, sustained by and sustaining the wanderers, the bullock drivers bringing in supplies and carting out wool, the drovers, the contractors sinking wells and building fences, Tom Collins with K form in his wallet. Thus *Such Is Life,* though its story seems to wander haphazardly all over the Riverina, has a unity of place and a unity of impression. The work and the needs of the stations bring into a community of interest and occupation all types from the squatter to the dead-beat hoping for a job.

In spite of the hints in Mr. Vance Palmer's prefaces, it has long been customary to regard *Such Is Life* as a mere formless unorganised slice of life. Recently critics have begun to see a more careful and elaborate organisation in the book, particularly since the publication of Mr. Thomson's most important article. This, I think, would have pleased Furphy. He tried to bluff his readers into taking the book as a formless record of experience. He could hardly have hoped to bluff them for so long. When he first sent his book to Sydney he described it as a "full-sized novel". Tom Collins refers to it as a collection of scrappy and informal annals. But I think we miss the point of it if we take the book simply as a novel cunningly disguised for the mere fun of it. Furphy seldom does anything *merely* for fun. Humour to him is not just ornament. It is a way of seeing and presenting the truth. We have to take everything at least half seriously.

Let us keep the title in mind. Furphy asks us to believe that the book is simply a record of experience on certain days of his life. It is not fiction. Obviously he must claim that he is a chronicler and not a romancer. If he admits that he is writing fiction he lays himself open to the charge of manipulating events to suit his theories. "Now

try to imagine a writer of fiction", he remarks, "deliberately inventing an incident which seems to strike at the very root of his argument" (204). "A suppositious case would have been open to the imputation of falsity. Fact is authoritative." (*Rigby's Romance,* 134.) He makes Thompson say, in *Rigby's Romance*: "Tom and Dixon will ball me out if I exaggerate for the sake of my argument." Since he is concerned with the significance of its events, he must ask us to accept the book as a record of fact, not as fiction. The importance of this in Furphy's mind quite rules out the possibility that he simply disguised a highly organised fictitious narrative as a formless record of events. We must play the game as Furphy intended and believe the book as free of Furphy's imagination as if, apart from the philosophy and comment, it had been set down by a recording angel, though we know that in fact it was most artfully contrived. We observe, for example, certain connections between parts of the narrative; in the last chapter certain threads are taken up and woven together. Collins asks us to believe that he didn't design these connections. They simply happened to be there and he is in no better position than the reader to discover them. This claim is not merely a literary pose. Unless we concede it we miss the point of the book.

Here then, says Furphy, is a mere record of events on eight widely separated days of one man's life. On the surface the record is chaotic and formless, broken up into a number of disconnected stories. To find a single line of narrative running through one day is as much as we can expect. From one day to the next there can, on the face of it, be no connection except the reappearance, in fact or by report, of familiar persons and places. But as we read we discover connections between one part of the book and another. We find a thread of narrative, dropped earlier, being taken up again, puzzling events and characters explained after a long interval, a series of happenings which seemed susceptible of one obvious interpretation, shown later to have had a quite different meaning. Ragged ends are taken up and woven into the fabric of the book. And such is life. On the surface it is formless and chaotic, showing a well defined pattern only in small isolated fragments. But when we look more closely we trace effects back to causes which at first we did not recognise, we discover seemingly isolated happenings falling into relationships with one another that suggest a pattern, a direction and cohesion if not quite an inner logic and a purpose. The more one looks at life the more clearly this vague pattern takes shape. The more one thinks about *Such Is Life* the more its organisation becomes apparent.

But that organisation is not as thoroughgoing and the form not as definitely shaped as those of a novel. Furphy rejected the novel form because it imposed on life a sharpness of form, a selectivity in material, a sureness of direction and a consistent logic which are not to be observed in reality. The resolution of a conflict, the unravelling of a complication through the novel technique demands that principles of retribution and reward be accepted which may be seen in reality as often violated as observed. The very requirements of the novelist's technique oblige him to mould life into a shape which is at variance with reality. It is an impossible task to invest "a generally haphazard economy with poetic justice" (65).

Such Is Life is more than a novel in being less than a novel. Its structure is remarkable not merely for its novelty, or for its variation from the conventional form of the novel, but also for its significance. Much of the meaning of *Such Is Life* is conveyed by its structure alone.

There is a purpose behind everything that Furphy does. Collins has before him a pile of old pocket diaries. He decides to undertake the annotation of a week's record. He shuts his eyes, takes up one of the volumes and opens it. It is the volume covering 1883 and it opens at the week beginning Sunday, 9th September. So he sets down the events of that day. When he comes to the next day he sees that the record will make necessary the reporting of such a deal of profanity and vulgarity that he recoils from the task. So he changes his plan. He decides to pick out the 9th day of each month for seven months. This, he says, will give the record a wider range. For the next four months he honours his contract, even though it may mean his relating experiences painful to recall. But there has already been one change in the scheme of the book and later there is to be another. Collins commiserates with his reader who is thus at the mercy of one who cannot honour a contract drawn up entirely to suit himself. He excuses himself on the ground that "March 9th is not a desirable text", and once more avails himself of "the prerogative hitherto so profitably sustained". He annotates March 28th and 29th.

But there is a weightier reason for this last variation of the plan. Furphy is fastidious in the accuracy of even the smallest details and he will do nothing to affront our sense of likelihood. For example Priestley's waggon approaches to within ten yards or so of Montgomery's buggy without either man's being aware of the other's presence. How could this happen? Montgomery's buggy faced away from Priestley and the hood screened the bullock driver from the squatter's view. Priestley was so intent upon guiding the bullocks and

seeing that the waggon cleared the trees that he did not see Montgomery. But what about the noise of the bullocks and the waggon, asks the captious reader. "And all this time the unconscious son of perdition was crawling nearer; not a jolt nor a click-clock came from his waggon as it pressed the yielding soil; and the faint creaking of the tackle was drowned in the rustle of a hot wind through the foliage." Everything is accounted for. This is the Furphy who humorously discovers flaws in Coleridge's picture of the painted ship and in the Biblical simile involving the upward flight of sparks. He will not ask us to accept the unlikely. He will not ask us to believe that the events of each day should take the form of a single well proportioned story, or that a self-contained story should begin with the chosen day and neatly end with it. So he will come near the end of a day and remark that certain other uninteresting things happened in what remained of it. Or he will begin to record a connected series of events, but will find that he has to encroach upon the following day to finish it. The story of the lost clothes is only half-way finished on 9th November. Though legal risk is now added to outraged sensibility Collins says: "I shall proceed with the record of the next day, till my loco. reaches the end of the current section" (140). "And so ends the day. But not the narrative. I am mindful of my promise" (203). By thus claiming a certain liberty of selection Furphy contrives it so that each day's record has a unity, without straining the reader's sense of probability. This unity of the separate sections helps to throw the reader off the scent of connections between them. But he asserts that he has no liberty of selection beyond this. "I am committed to any narrative imposed by my random selection of dates."

The pretext for the two changes of plan, solemnly delivered, is that by faithfully following the original plan Furphy would have to record an amount of vulgarity and profanity intolerable to the refined reader and the equally refined narrator. The real reasons he leaves it to us to discover. First he decides to record and annotate the events of the 9th day of each month, not the seven successive days of a week. This, as he says, will widen the sweep of the narrative. This, we admit, is an obvious gain. But there is a further reason. He will not pretend that the seven days of a week would be as full of varied incident as the days described in the book. In the last chapter certain threads are taken up from earlier chapters and woven together. Will he ask us to believe that scraps of narrative which come into view on the 9th day of various months should be explained and concluded on the 9th day? Not Furphy. The date must be varied. Further, the elaborate disguise is essential for the last chapter.

Thus the necessity of the Wilcannia shower and the visit to Jack the Shellback, and the decision to take two days instead of one.

March 28th and 29th differ from all the other days in that Collins chose them for what they contained: "This arbitrary departure in dates will give you another glimpse of Alf Jones. Also the peculiar scythe-sweep of my narrative will take in a rencontre with another person, to whom, in your helpless state as reader, you have already been introduced" (329.) None of the other days is chosen for what it contains, and as he writes the record of one day Collins does not know what is held by the next day to be treated. Once he slyly takes a glance forward: "Unfortunately, a glance along the 9ths yet to come shows me that this nobly spurious type of prodigal—Jack the Shellback, vassal of Runnymede station—will not come within the scope of these memoirs" (184.) But Jack *does* appear—on March 28th. This looking ahead, however, is a breaking of the rules. The reader knows that the whole book was in Joseph Furphy's head before he started to write, but he is asked to pretend that at any point in it Tom Collins does not know what is ahead. The last chapter, therefore, in which so many threads are drawn together is a most significant exception. Again Furphy will not ask us to believe that he hit by accident upon such an important day. Is it to be wondered at, when details such as this turn out to be significant, that the more we read the book the more cunningly constructed we discover it to be?

Furphy intends that the reader should discover the connections in the book for himself. He gives no help. He simply gives the evidence, the mass of fact and event. The reader has to trace the threads running through the narrative for himself, and far from helping him, Furphy slyly tries to throw him off the scent. There is, for instance, the story of Warrigal Alf and his Molly running right through the book. The reader has to connect the clues given in Cooper's story of his sister, in Warrigal Alf's confessions made during his illness, in Collins' visit to Nosey Alf and in the subsequent report that Nosey Alf has been seen wandering the country in which Warrigal Alf was last reported to have been seen. When the reader gathers together the loose ends of four distinct sections of the book, widely separated, he has the outline of a continuous tragic story, running from end to end of the book.

Furphy asks us to interpret the evidence, to pick up and relate the clues which he lays before us not only in a connected story like this of Alf but in smaller matters. The more we read the book the more we admire the artfulness with which he leaves the clues. They are hidden with just sufficient cunning to make their discovery an enjoyable

mental exercise, but not so heavily disguised as to make their discovery and connection discouragingly difficult. He has a way of raising questions without an accompanying answer. The reader knows there must be an answer and sets out in search of it. Sooner or later he has the satisfaction of discovering the answer through some small hint ten or even a hundred pages removed from the question. For example when Collins asks Rory O'Halloran's little girl her name, Mrs. O'Halloran breaks in with: "She's got no name" (p. 89). Why? the reader asks. Is she illegitimate? This is impossible. The parents were married and the mother was fearsomely proper. We know there is the deepest of gulfs between Rory and his wife in religion. This question remains at the back of our minds, not quite settled. It is answered on p. 241. When Thompson finishes the story of the lost child he tells how she was taken into Hay for burial: "Catholic priest in Hay sympathised very strongly with him, he told me, but couldn't read the service over her, on account of her not being baptised." So that was it. The religious difference between the parents prevented them from agreeing upon the baptism of the child. And this, to her severely religious mother, meant that she had no name. The reader feels that he will not soon come to the end of these connections. Bob and Bat are reported dead in Chapter I. Bob later turns up and explains the truth. The dog that came down to Solliker from heaven was the "Monkey" lost by Thompson. Small remarks connect one chapter with another by recollection or anticipation. "My watch is at the bottom of the Murray", connects Chapters 3 and 4 by recollection. "I had enough of your doctoring at the yellow tank, bust you", from Warrigal Alf in his sickness, connects Chapters 4 and 6 by anticipation. The reader acquires a technique of reading Furphy. Whenever a remark seems inexplicable or a character unfamiliar he holds it in mind for later clarification. Mrs. Beaudesert for example is mentioned some half dozen times before she appears. Warrigal Alf's misanthropy is so constantly referred to that it becomes a problem demanding an explanation.

Furphy gives the reader plentiful opportunity for this agreeable occupation. Take, for example, the revelation of the awful truth about his superior officer.

Tom Collins receives a paper from Jeff Rigby (p. 303). In it there is an account of the Melbourne regatta, with a photograph of the stroke of the winning crew, and an account of his "history, past habits and physical excellencies". This account gives Furphy quite a turn. The man was twenty-two years of age, evidently "what the Life-Assurance Canvassers call an 'excellent risk' ". He had a good

position in the N.S.W. Civil Service and was now on leave of absence. Why should Collins get "quite a turn", exclaim *sic transit*? Our clues are—the man is young, likely to live a long life, is in the Civil Service, and on leave of absence. This information upsets Furphy. The reference to the Civil Service makes us think of Furphy's position as Deputy-Assistant-Sub-Inspector, with the mortuary reversion of the Assistant-Sub-Inspectorship. He has been confident that in the ordinary course the mortuary reversion would not long be delayed. Now if he were to discover that his superior was a young and physically vigorous man he *would* get quite a turn and his hopes would fade—*Sic transit.* Is Rudolph Winterbottom, then, his superior? How can we test the hypothesis? The name means nothing for we have never heard it before. Or have we? But we recall Collins' trick of poking fun at indecipherable signatures, and remember that earlier in the book he had received a letter from his superior. So we hunt back through the book and find the letter on p. 163. There is our confirmation. The signature reads R. Wmlnlnllnn. Reading the letter again we find further confirmation in the reference to three months' leave of absence.

Part of the fun is that there is more than one way of tracing the clues. The solution may be more or less laborious than the one we have outlined. But Furphy very cleverly makes the solution not so obvious as to deprive the reader of satisfaction in reaching it, and not so difficult as to deter him. And, just when we feel pleased at our solution of this puzzle, we turn over the early pages of the book, and there we find an important clue which had dropped from our memories: "My superior officer lives there. Remotely possible you may know him—Rudolph Winterbottom, Esquire" (p. 46). To half conceal and half reveal and to dispose these numerous clues with such adroitness that the reader is coaxed and teased into hunting and relating them requires at least as much artful planning as is to be found in the most deftly articulated mystery novel.

In the story of the incendiary a series of events is related so as plainly to be susceptible of only one interpretation: later it is shown that their significance was entirely different. Furphy engagingly leads Tom Collins and the reader up the garden path. This is quite a feat of writing. Both interpretations must fit the facts. A slip in detail would wreck the whole fabric. The crux of the story is the interview between Collins and the owner of the haystack. Collins imagines that he himself is suspected; Mr. Q—— actually suspects Andrew Glover. Mr. Q——'s circumstantial evidence must, therefore, fit the movements of both Collins and Glover. Collins relies upon the difficulty of

identifying the suspect. "You have evidence that this suspected incendiary was seen somewhere down the river yesterday—or up the river was it?—and you saw him somewhere here this morning. Very well. Would the two descriptions of dress and deportment tally exactly with each other, and with the appearance of the person whom, independently of that evidence, you know to be the perpetrator—I mean the individual of the camp-fire?" If Mr. Q—— suspects him, Collins, then he (Collins) knows that in those separate appearances he was clad in his old clothes, in the clothes stolen from Mr. Q——'s house, in his new clothes, and that at the camp-fire he was without clothes. But those four appearances fit Andrew Glover's movements too. Eloquently Collins impresses upon Mr. Q—— the dangers of being sued for false accusation. He is satisfied that he has so far frightened Mr. Q—— that he will not proceed with the prosecution. He challenges Mr. Q—— to supply a motive. Mr. Q—— declines, but of course he knows of a perfectly good motive, revenge for the blackguarding received by Andrew the previous day. Collins challenges the police to bring on their clue. In the last chapter we learn that Andrew Glover served three months for burning the stack. Mr. Q—— *was* impressed by the danger of being sued for false arrest, but only to the extent of reducing the charges against Andrew. We put the two accounts together. They tally exactly. And as we think over the incident we keep discovering the importance of numerous details, as for example, of Andrew's deafness which did not allow him to hear all that was being said in court, and later made him report his accuser's name, Quarterman, as Waterman.

In ordaining that the reader should find and interpret the clues on his own without help from the narrator, Furphy created a formidable problem for himself. Is he to pretend that Collins, who is forever commenting upon events and persons, is so dull as to miss the clues? If Collins does not miss the clues he must interpret them because it is against his nature not to do so, and the reader will be spared the trouble which Furphy intends he shall take. Furphy not only overcomes the difficulty. He turns it to humorous account.

Take, for example, the way in which Collins misses the clues in the story of Warrigal Alf, and toils his way to a quite wrong interpretation of the story. When Collins misinterprets the story to Stewart we feel that perhaps we can forgive him for failing to connect Cooper's story with the hints given by Alf in his delirium. He takes Alf's remarks about his wife and about Cooper's sister Molly as referring to the same person. He gets it into his head that Alf's wife was a tawny-haired tigress. Where did he get such an idea, we wonder? Then

we remember that he had been reading an Ouida romance and had sunk deeper and deeper into a romantic trance from which Mosey had great difficulty in stirring him—"What a sweet, spicy, piquant thing it must be to be lured to destruction by a tawny-haired tigress with slumbrous dark eyes". When he meets Stewart he goes on with this rigmarole. He is keen on working out the whole anatomy of Alf's misanthropy. He wants to argue from the effect, through the circumstances, which he imagines he knows, to the cause, namely Alf's character. He is so intent upon this complex web of theory that he misses what is under his nose. The reader at this point has the satisfaction of being miles ahead of Collins, while suspecting that Furphy is slyly trying to throw him off the scent. Collins goes blundering on when he meets Nosey Alf, who is the Molly of Cooper's story and Warrigal Alf's confession of his "one deliberately fiendish and heartless action". The indications that Nosey Alf is a woman are plentiful. But more significant is her anxiety to learn something about Warrigal Alf without appearing curious. Collins' obtuseness causes him to inflict the most terrible mental anguish on Nosey Alf. He cannot understand her being upset when she learns that Warrigal Alf had actually been duffing in her paddock. This torture, unwittingly inflicted, reaches its climax when, replying to a remark made by Molly about her disfigurement, Collins says: "It's pure effeminacy to brood over such things, for that is just where we have the advantage of women. A woman's first duty is to be beautiful." At this "The boundary man laid down his pipe, rested his forehead in his arm upon the table, and for a minute or two sobbed like a child". In the intervals between Alf's "fits" Collins is very busy spinning theories about the effect of moonlight and the midnight hour upon the mentally unstable. When he takes leave of her in the morning he remarks: "I can see through you like glass. I could write your biography." Collins' obtuseness seems incredible. But Furphy has taken great pains to explain it by carefully establishing Collins' inordinate love of the most tortuous and laboured processes of reasoning. Collins drifts into metaphysical speculation in season and out of season. Standing nude on a huge log drifting down the Murray, leaning against an upturned root in an Apollo attitude, he is so intently absorbed by a problem of ethics that in his abstraction he makes for the Victorian instead of the New South Wales side of the river, and finds himself separated by the river from his camp and his clothes. On one occasion Warrigal Alf told him the stories of four men, each of whom acted differently on discovering his wife's infidelity. Alf wants an answer to the question: which of them did right? Collins begins by distinguish-

ing the circumstances, defining the terms, enumerating precedents. He is enjoying it. But Alf is impatient and hurries Collins to a conclusion. Collins gives his opinion, though considerably grieved that Alf had to have the answer "like a half raw potato", that Alf would not allow him to play the game to its finish and applaud his adroitness. He suffers a like mortification when Nosey Alf cuts his performance short with: "Aren't you sleepy?" Collins boasts that there is no problem which he cannot solve if only he is "allowed to work-out these things in my own circuitous way". But he must have time. And he will follow the most tortuous route possible, the route that will lead last to a solution.

When Andrew Glover tells his story of the burnt haystack Collins confesses to only a vaguely fancied recognition of him. Surely, we think, this is too much. He could hardly fail to recognise Andrew with his bad eyes and bad hearing, and the deep impression left on his mind by the painful adventure associated with the burnt haystack cannot have been obliterated. But Collins has a theory: "With the circumspection of a seasoned specialist, I had bracketed two independent hypotheses, either of which would supply a satisfactory solution. One of these simply attributes the whole matter to unconscious cerebration. But here a question arose: If one half of my brain had been more alert than its duplicate when the object first presented itself—etc." Collins is on his way, so bemused by his theories that he cannot see what is under his nose. He must gather all the evidence, sift and arrange it, gather his precedents and analogies, then submit the whole mass to the most tedious and toilsome process of analysis and reasoning that he can devise. The more laborious it is the more he enjoys it. It is a pity to interrupt him. Collins has a reasonable chance of getting to the right solution eventually, but he will be plodding contentedly along miles behind the reader. Thus Furphy contrives it that the reader may beat Collins every time in interpreting the facts laid before us without having to attribute an improbable and unexplained degree of stupidity to Collins. It is an ingenious and amusing solution to a really formidable problem.

SOME MEMORIES AND COMMENTS

THE TRUE FURPHY

By Kate Baker

Joseph Furphy was full of quips and quirks and quiddities. Even the acute mind of Mrs. Nettie Palmer is misled by his whimsies.

In her letter to "Tom Collins" in *Meanjin Papers,* Autumn Number, 1943, she reproaches him with what she considers his concessions to convention. Joseph Furphy was little concerned about protecting the delicate sensibilities of the Young Person. He took an impish delight in his own camouflaging. As he himself would say, "Lis'n and perpend".

My Mother (complainingly): "And there was that Harry Baker with his dirty legs *sprawled* over my clean counterpane."

Joseph Furphy: "Oh! Mrs. Baker, you shock me."

M.M. (sharply): "How do I shock you?"

J.F.: "Did you say—did you say Harry's l-e-g-s?"

M.M.: "Yes, his *dirty* legs."

J.F.: "Oh, but Mrs. Baker—in polite society we are not supposed to have organs and members. They mustn't be mentioned."

M.M.: "Oh, then what would *you* call 'legs'?"

J.F.: "Well, I—I might p'raps, say his 'limbs', his 'lower limbs'."

M.M.: "Och! go way with you." Mother laughed and Joseph Furphy added his throaty gurgle.

No, Tom Collins made no concession to convention, but rather a caricature—a burlesque—a travesty of it.

And he knew well that his readers would be able to supply every cryptic noun, adj., verb, adverb in the story.

"Miss Baker", said the late Rev. James Cheong, M.A. (of happy memory), Curate in Charge of the Clergy House, St. Peter's, Eastern Hill, Melbourne, "Miss Baker, I read 'Dixon's Wooing' to the boys—a group of divinity students—last night, and had them rolling on the floor doubled up with laughter, imploring me to 'stop! stop!'."

I laughed. I could visualise the scene, the soft-voiced padre, with the gleam of humour in his eyes, and his convulsed hearers.

Oh, Tom Collins knew what he was about. Leave him alone.

He was quick, too, at repartee. A man once remarked that I should have been a missioner.

"Why?" said I, for I had never felt any inclination to minister to the "heathen in his blindness".

"Oh!" said Joseph Furphy, "that's an easy one. *Everyone knows the natives likem fat.*"

My excess of *"adipose tissue"* was a sore point with me at that time.

HOW I MET TOM COLLINS

By the late GILBERT M. WALLACE*

More than forty years ago I taught a little one-teacher school at Kerang East, on the open plains where the wind blows bleak in winter and hot in summer, where the mud clings closer to your boots than in any other place on earth, and you kick off a perfect half-globe from either heel at the door scraper.

The grass was sweet at Kerang East, and the dairy-farmers drew good monthly cheques at the local creamery. Irrigation channels, fed by water from the Kow Swamp, were just beginning to function to the advantage of pasture and crops.

I boarded with a farmer who lived close to the school and kept the local post office. His house was an unpretentious one, built of mud bricks and without a veranda. Heavens! How hot it was on a midsummer night, the adobe walls refusing to part with the heat that had baked them through the day, and carrying on a kind of bank balance to the morrow.

I had just come up from Melbourne. I had always been an omnivorous reader, and, in my pride of book-knowledge and in the bumptiousness of youth, I was inclined to under-rate the intelligence of my rural associates. Later reflection has caused me to think that, in all the practical affairs of life, they knew much more than I did; but certainly they had read very little, and I wearied at times for a literary discussion. However, I was destined to have one that was unforgettable.

One day when school was over and I had gone down to the farmhouse for the evening meal, I was introduced to a stranger who had come to stop for the night. He was a Hornsby reaper-and-binder expert, and was introduced to me as Mr. Furphy. He was a man apparently of middle age, decently dressed, with keen intelligent eyes, and that good Australian frankness of manner that puts a stranger immediately at his ease and encourages confidences.

The conversation during the meal turned on *The Bulletin*, then a power in the land under the able editorship of Archibald. Mr. Furphy and I discussed our favourite writers among those who contributed to the journal, and I found his comments extremely shrewd and well-reasoned, and his memory of the various writers' words and phrases very full and exact. We capped quotations harmoniously, and I was delighted to find a mind so much in sympathy with my own. By and by I quoted something from "Tom Collins", whose outback sketches were at the time a notable feature of *The Bulletin*. He laughed, "Yes, I wrote that in pencil by my camp-fire in the Riverina". "Good heavens", I said, "are you Tom Collins?" "That's my alias", was the reply.

The farmer and his family went to bed; they had to be up early for the milking; but Tom Collins and I went on talking, and then some, as the Yankees would say; and more and more till the night was spent, and we were still talking when my sleepy host came out in shirt and breeches and with bare feet at the break of day. "Good God!" said he, "haven't you fellows bin to bed at all?"

There have been two men in this world with whom I sat up all night talking and not feeling the need of sleep, and Tom Collins was one of them. He interested me very much, and I must have interested him, or one of us must

* Victorian educationist and man of letters.

have wearied. It is strange that, in the lapse of years, the memory of our talk is almost as clear to me as if it had happened last night.

From discussing *The Bulletin* and its writers, we drifted into Shakespeare, and here again I was astonished by my companion's wealth and exactitude of knowledge and aptness of criticism. A chance Biblical phrase of mine (my mother used to read aloud a daily chapter when I was a boy) was promptly seized upon and continued by my new friend, and, like the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost,* we engaged in friendly arguments concerning "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute". Then we lit our torch with "rapt Isaiah's walk, seraphic fire", and uttered sonorous passages from the Royal Bard and Jeremiah, and more than all from Ecclesiastes, contrasting Solomon with Omar Khayyam—I think to the disadvantage of the latter. History and philosophy and science lent their sleep-killing aid, and then we got down to more personal matters—from the general to the particular. Tom Collins became autobiographical.

He told me that, when a young man, his reading had been mainly of a trashy nature. Any old sixpenny thriller was good enough for him, and he devoured them by the dozen. But one day, as with Saul on his way to Damascus, the Lord took a fall out of him; as in the case of John Bunyan, a voice from Heaven did dart into his soul. "Furphy", it said, "perhaps you've only one life to live, or maybe you think so. Now, are you going to waste it or employ it to the best advantage? Give up this toying with ephemeral fiction and read the things that are more excellent." So, with a clean heart and a contrite spirit, he chose the Bible and Shakespeare for intensive study. By campfire light when he was a bullock-driver in Riverina, he studied two books. He read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and then turned back to Genesis and went through the lot again. He bought commentaries on the Gospels, read Christian evidences and freethought attacks in order to be perfectly fair, and then had another perusal of the Bible to see to what extent faith and unfaith had misrepresented the Word. Shakespeare he had treated as thoroughly and remorselessly. He had read all the plays over and over, had waded through Shakespeare commentaries, and had finally been greatly intrigued by the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. At my request he gave me a close and complete summary of Ignatius Donnelly's *The Great Cryptogram,* a book I had never read. Then, of course, we got on to Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* and Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* and Morris's *News from Nowhere,* and Bacon's *Lost Atlantis,* and More's *Utopia,* Plato's *Republic* and other books of that type. What a night it was! Unfortunately I had to go to work the next day, and he had to drive into Kerang to catch his train, and all we could say was "So long". It was indeed "So long", for I never saw him again. But when I re-read his unmethodical musings in *Such is Life,* the memory comes back to me of the kitchen-diningroom in the mud-built farmhouse, and the dim kerosene lamp, and the soft voice of a man talking through the night of things that were dear to his soul. Clear-eyed, straight-speaking Tom Collins! I wonder have you met your literary heroes on the other side, granting that there is another side! If so, I warrant they're as keenly interested in you as you are in them.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S NEPHEW

By Guy Innes*

Samuel Furphy and my grandmother, the late Mrs. Alexander Innes, subsequently Mrs. Kinnear (born Elizabeth Furphy), an immigrant from Armagh, were brother and sister. They were pioneers. On Black Thursday my grandmother took refuge in a creek from the bushfires which swept Victoria, with her two little daughters beside her. They died, before reaching womanhood, of one of the febrile complaints so common in those arduous years.

Coming of such stock (the Furphys travelled to Australia in a ship from which only the first-class passengers would have been allowed to take to the boats in the event of disaster), it is not remarkable that Joseph Furphy, who was fully articulate, should have been able to interpret the outlook of the first generation to be born in the new land. On reaching adult age, he embodied his wide experience of all that was then implied by the term "The Riverina" in Australia's best and almost only picaresque, *Such Is Life*. The sensitive *Rigby's Romance* was an excerpt from this book which will pierce the hearts of all star-crossed lovers.

Such Is Life is Australian in its very title, which reproduced the last words of Ned Kelly the bushranger, widely regarded, in spite of his crimes, as Robin Hood was regarded in Merrie England. I have no doubt that *Such Is Life* will be remembered and read long after the centenary of its author; but only in the land which gave it birth. It will no more bear transportation than the living creatures of the Bush which perish in English exile.

A version of *Such Is Life*, edited by Vance Palmer, who may have been handicapped by the conditions of his undertaking, has been published in England, where it had as little success as the adventure of another Australian of ~~the~~ Australians—Henry Lawson, on his visit to London.

But these occurrences do not disprove that Furphy and Lawson are of and for Australia, and shall so remain long after their generation has passed away.

Compatriots of Furphy, twenty years in London, can still be swept back into the deep stream of the life of their native land, and can be given sight once more of the scrubs cleared, the fields tilled, and the pastures grazed by its indomitable pioneers, by virtue of the long swirl of Furphy's powerful prose and the persuasiveness of his ruminant and leisurely philosophy. He has faithfully depicted the people and the country of his day, and has placed on record many a type, then characteristic of a land on the road to nationhood, which is now extinct. But there was not one of them but helped to pave that road, perhaps to confer their traditions on those who battled after them and won to happier days.

But one must have been born in Australia in order to appreciate the true inwardness of Furphy's portrayal of it. To look for enthusiastic, or even sympathetic reactions, from the purely English reader is as unreasonable as to expect England's dewy glades to be seared by Australia's fierce sunlight, or to see the bullock teams which faced the Fog-a-bolla sandhill threading the traffic of the Strand.

American readers of pioneer ancestry—for in the Middle West people are nearer to their origins than they are in England—may perhaps be more percipient

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in these matters. But I feel that few even of these will share Mr. Clinton Hartley Grattan's justifiable enthusiasm for Joseph Furphy's remarkable and enduring achievement. Hartley Grattan has visited Australia. They have not.

FURPHY'S POEMS

In *The Poems of Joseph Furphy,* as collected by Miss Kate Baker and published by Lothian, Melbourne, a number of typographical errors occurred. The following list of corrections has been kindly supplied by Miss Baker. Possessors of copies of the book may care to embody these corrections in the text.

Page 7, "A Christmas Hymn": The refrain "Glory to God; to men good will!" should be close up to the line: "Rings from yon far Judaean hill—"; as it appears, it looks like the title of a new poem.

„ 9, "Brahm": 2nd verse, line 10 should be "are not what they seem".
„ 10, 4th „ „ 3 „ „ "winks"
„ 10, 4th „ „ 13 „ „ "nebulae"
„ 11, 7th „ „ 2 „ „ "shear"
„ 12, 8th „ „ 3 „ „ "unto"
„ 12, 9th „ „ 4 „ „ "fantods"
„ 13, 12th „ „ 19 „ „ "clog"
„ 13, 12th „ „ 24 „ „ "rattling"
„ 15, "A Psalm of Fortitude": line 4 should read "lays you flat"
„ 28, "The Gumsucker's Dirge": 4th verse, line 1, "Army".
„ 31, "The Schoolhouse on the Plain": 6th verse, line 5, "discomfit"
„ 31, „ „ „ „ „ 7th „ „ 1, "India"
„ 37, "Birthday Lines to K.B.": 2nd verse, line 10, "this"
„ 43, "The Death of President Lincoln": 1st verse, line 13, "Columbia's lofty notes"
„ 48, „ „ „ „ „ 14th „ „ 9, "Of those who with Leonidas"
„ 48, „ „ „ „ „ 14th „ „ 13, "Of Hastings' Saxons"
„ 56, "Time": line 7, "girt"
„ 56, „ „ 12, "Rolled back the gates of sleep".

EXPLANATION

The Furphy number was in the press when the late stoppage in printing operations occurred. After work had been resumed the supply of power for the presses was withdrawn. Such is life!

Yet Furphy publications have usually been belated. Correspondingly, they enjoy growing success. Although the delay in the issue of this number is to be regretted, its contents have not lost their value in the interval; it is hoped that this publication too will meet with increasing acceptance.